DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR CHRISTIANS

VOL. I.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

SHORT READINGS FOR RELIGIOUS

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VISITS TO JESUS AND MARY

THE CATHOLIC PRAYER BOOK

SWEET SACRAMENT DIVINE

DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR CHRISTIANS

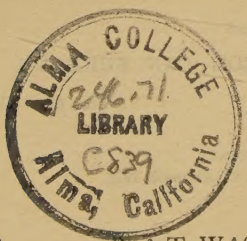
BY THE VERY REV.

FATHER CHARLES COX, O.M.I.

ADMINISTRATOR APOSTOLIC OF THE TRANSVAAL

'Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word of God.'
ST. LUKE iv. 4.

VOL. I.
JANUARY TO JUNE



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✠ AUGUSTIN DONTENWILL, O.M.I.,
ARCHBISHOP OF PTOLEMAÏS,
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TO

THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

MOST LOVING SAVIOUR

AND TRUEST FRIEND

IN HEAVEN

AND IN

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

TO WHOM BE

GLORY, PRAISE, AND THANKSGIVING

FOR EVERMORE

THIS WORK IS HUMBLY DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE Faithful are often exhorted to practise spiritual reading. Not many persons are prepared to devote every day to this useful practice more than a few moments. Those who are willing to adopt it sometimes find a difficulty in selecting suitable books. If they take up spiritual works containing long treatises, they may have to put them down before they have grasped a concise idea of the matter treated of, and their short daily readings may thus fail to afford the desired profit.

The present work offers the devout Faithful, for every day of the year, three pages of matter suitable for spiritual reading. The subjects are varied, and every set of reflections stands complete by itself.

While not pretending that any of the many reflections, taken singly, will produce much fruit, the Author yet ventures to hope that the daily use of the 'Reflections' will tend to effect solid spiritual benefit. If any of the Faithful find that happily this proves so, they might, should occasion offer, suggest to others the use of these 'Daily Reflections.'

The Author ventures to think that his work may prove acceptable for use in colleges, convents, and families where the custom exists of having a short spiritual lesson or meditation read after night prayers; or, again, for use in churches where, at some of the devotions, a lesson is read.

TABLE OF MOVABLE FEASTS

Year of our Lord.	Ash Wednesday.	Easter Sunday.	Ascension Day.	Whit. Sunday.	Corpus Christi.	First Sunday in Advent.
1913	Feb. 5	Mar. 23	May 1	May 11	May 22	Nov. 30
1914	Feb. 25	Apr. 12	May 21	May 31	June 11	Nov. 29
1915	Feb. 17	Apr. 4	May 13	May 23	June 3	Nov. 28
1916	Mar. 8	Apr. 23	June 1	June 11	June 22	Dec. 3
1917	Feb. 21	Apr. 8	May 17	May 27	June 7	Dec. 2
1918	Feb. 13	Mar. 31	May 9	May 19	May 30	Dec. 1
1919	Mar. 5	Apr. 20	May 29	June 8	June 19	Nov. 30
1920	Feb. 18	Apr. 4	May 13	May 23	June 3	Nov. 28
1921	Feb. 9	Mar. 27	May 5	May 15	May 26	Nov. 27
1922	Mar. 1	Apr. 16	May 25	June 4	June 15	Dec. 3
1923	Feb. 14	Apr. 1	May 10	May 20	May 31	Dec. 2
1924	Mar. 5	Apr. 20	May 29	June 8	June 19	Nov. 30
1925	Feb. 25	Apr. 12	May 21	May 31	June 11	Nov. 29
1926	Feb. 17	Apr. 4	May 13	May 23	June 3	Nov. 28
1927	Mar. 2	Apr. 17	May 26	June 5	June 16	Nov. 27
1928	Feb. 22	Apr. 8	May 17	May 27	June 7	Dec. 2
1929	Feb. 13	Mar. 31	May 9	May 19	May 30	Dec. 1
1930	Mar. 5	Apr. 20	May 29	June 8	June 19	Nov. 30
1931	Feb. 18	Apr. 5	May 14	May 24	June 4	Nov. 29
1932	Feb. 10	Mar. 27	May 5	May 15	May 26	Nov. 27
1933	Mar. 1	Apr. 16	May 25	June 4	June 15	Dec. 3
1934	Feb. 14	Apr. 1	May 10	May 20	May 31	Dec. 2
1935	Mar. 6	Apr. 21	May 30	June 9	June 20	Dec. 1
1936	Feb. 26	Apr. 12	May 21	May 31	June 11	Nov. 29
1937	Feb. 10	Mar. 28	May 6	May 16	May 27	Nov. 28
1938	Mar. 2	Apr. 17	May 26	June 5	June 16	Nov. 27
1939	Feb. 22	Apr. 9	May 18	May 28	June 8	Dec. 3
1940	Feb. 7	Mar. 24	May 2	May 12	May 23	Dec. 1
1941	Feb. 22	Apr. 13	May 22	June 1	June 12	Nov. 30
1942	Feb. 18	Apr. 5	May 14	May 24	June 4	Nov. 29
1943	Mar. 10	Apr. 25	June 3	June 13	June 24	Nov. 28

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January 1.

'I HAVE THOUGHT ON MY WAYS.'

I. CONSIDERING how uncertain man's life is, and at the same time how important is its issue, Christians should frequently, and even habitually, try the pulse of their spiritual life, to see if its indications are satisfactory. At no time can men say how near they may be to the end of their life. Perhaps now one-half or three-quarters of our life is already spent. There have been many men who thought they were only beginning life when they were very near its close. Our Lord tells us of a prosperous man who determined to build new barns for all his produce, and who promised himself many years, but who died in the very night that followed the day on which he made his resolve. Even if death be not at hand in our own case, we may feel sure that our future years will pass by as quickly as those that are already past. How easily and how suddenly the thread of life is often broken! Just as we have seen other men depart this life before us, so shall our own turn come. How foolish it would be on our part if we were to misspend our lifetime, and to live unprepared for our turn whenever it shall come! That we may not be so foolish, we should often try the pulse of our spiritual life. David says: 'I have thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies' (Ps. cxviii. 59). If we frequently examine the condition of our spiritual life, we shall not be in ignorance of what that condition is; and, moved by grace, we shall seek to amend what is seen to be unsatisfactory.

Devout Christian, be not like the wicked, who love the darkness rather than the light, because their works are evil (St. John iii. 19), but desire ever to know what is actually the state of your conscience. Like David, think

on your ways, that you may amend what is faulty and that you may seek ever to renew yourself in dutifulness. If such be your conduct, you will not fear death.

II. Woe to Christians who, heedless of God's designs and of the lamentable results of their neglect, spend their lives to no purpose. Such as these do not think on their ways, and they depart ever farther and farther from the path that leads to eternal life, and they day by day add to their malice and to their recklessness. From this it will follow that their return to grace will be ever more difficult. Yet all the while the shadows of death are deepening around them. Many such men are cut off without conversion, and they die in their sins. Of such as these the holy writer says: 'There are some of whom there is no memorial; who are perished, as if they had never been' (Ecclus. xliv. 9). The deeds of their lifetime are not worthy of being recorded, and their end is without honour; and when they shall rise again for judgment, the Holy Scriptures tell us: 'They shall come with fear at the thought of their sins, and their iniquities shall stand against them to convict them' (Wisd. iv. 20). Then will they lament, but too late, and all in vain, that they did not think on their ways, and repent and amend, while it was the time of mercy, and before the day of salvation had passed away, to be succeeded for them by the night of reprobation and of never-ending despair. Then shall they make the useless confession, saying: 'We have erred from the way of truth. . . . We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known' (Wisd. v. 7).

Devout Christian, you see from this picture how fatal to sinners is the neglect of a timely examination of their conscience and of amendment. Happy, on the other hand, are Christians who fear to depart from the ways of duty, of piety, and of virtue, and who, therefore, often and regularly examine their conscience. Let this be your practice, and often renew your sorrow for your sins. This will prove useful to keep you in dutifulness and to renew your fervour.

III. Christians should examine their ways, even as the captain of a ship studies its course. They must not let their vessel drift with the current or run out of its course: they must watch the compass—that is, their heart and conscience—to see that they ever point in the right direction; and their chart must be the holy commandments of God, the demands of duty, and the ways of a devout Christian life. Thus will they steer their course safely through the dangers of the stormy sea of life; and when they shall have passed away they will leave behind them a record which will make their name honourable and their memory precious. It will be the record of religiousness in their relations with God; of charity, edification, and faithfulness in their relations with their neighbour; and of sobriety, purity, and uprightness in their personal conduct. Of these servants of God it is written, upon their departure: 'They are in peace . . . their hope is full of immortality. . . . Afflicted in few things, in many they shall be well rewarded: because God hath tried them, and found them worthy of Himself' (Wisd. iii. 3-5). Oh, who would not strive to lead a good life that such things might be said of them!

Devout Christian, think ever on your ways, and think wisely. Take counsel with grace, with duty, and with virtue, and follow their guidance. Avoid the ways of evil and of neglect. The Wise Man says: 'Think of the Lord in goodness, and seek Him in simplicity of heart. For He is found by them that tempt Him not: and He showeth Himself to them that have faith in Him' (Wisd. i. 1, 2). Beseech Mary, your heavenly Protectress, to obtain for you a detestation of all perversity, and the grace always to seek and pursue the ways of true wisdom, that you may ever wisely love what is pleasing to God, and never turn from the path that leads to eternal life.

January 2.

'WE HAVE NOT HERE A LASTING CITY.'

I. THE fleeting of our years, the changes we behold in Nature, the succession of the seasons, the budding, growth, bloom, and decay we see around us, and the daily chronicle of deaths, all combine to afford us strong testimony of the uncertainty of life, and of our having no settled existence in this world. St. Paul says: 'We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come' (Heb. xiii. 14). This should lead us not to live only for temporal and uncertain goods, nor to seek to build up an earthly mansion, but rather to lay up treasures in Heaven and to direct our lives to the future everlasting kingdom of God. We have been made heirs of that kingdom, and it will be ours if only we live as we ought. It should be a source of joy to all, that we are not to live for ever in this world of labour, anxiety, and sorrow; and it is so to devout Christians in every sphere of life who are animated with a lively faith and a sincere love of God. Bearing patiently the cross of their passing trials, and seeking ever to please God, their daily prayer is: 'Thy kingdom come.' From the valley of their distress they look up hopefully to the eternal hills and to the City of Peace, and the thought of the bright future brings them comfort and courage.

Devout Christian, let not sadness or misgiving chill your fervour or disturb your devotion. Live ever in hope of the happiness which will be bestowed as the reward of a good life. Do not attach yourself inordinately to the things of this life which will pass; only use them wisely. Pray for the grace to make your present life a proper preparation for the life that will follow it.

II. Compare briefly the city of our present existence, and that which is to come. As to the earthly city, its

happiest days are few, and even on these there is usually some drawback, something unpleasant, to lessen the enjoyment of them. Its greatest wealth causes much embarrassment and anxiety, and these tend to mar the pleasure of possessing it. Trouble and inconvenience are experienced by everybody, and the lives of many are crossed by dark shades of weariness, disappointment, anxiety, and suffering. Such is the present life; and it is one of only a few uncertain years' existence. How shall we describe the 'lasting City'? It is one of Divine delights, blissful peace, enrapturing joy, immeasurable happiness, heavenly beauty, and glorious magnificence; a City in which is seen no frown of displeasure and no wrinkle of care, and in which fear, sorrow, pain, and want are unknown. It is the City of God everlasting in duration. Alas! for foolish men who live for the earthly city only, and who do not look beyond it! The thought that they have not here a lasting city does not afford comfort to such as these. They are attached to the good things of the present life, and to the passing satisfactions, vanities, and pleasures of this world, in which they seem to have anchored all their hopes. The thought that their present existence will come to an end is a bitter and painful one.

Devout Christian, be wise, and do not set your heart upon the unreal pleasures of this life. Many lives are wrecked on account of them. Let your efforts and your energies be directed to your everlasting gain. Beware of every influence that would lead you in the least from the holy and safe path of duty and virtue. Say with David: 'It is good for me to adhere to my God' (Ps. lxxii. 28).

III. A devout writer says: 'What is the most protracted period of life but a short moment, a passing wind, a morning brightness that fades away?' How wise are those Christians who spend this brief existence in careful preparation for the future! They use the means of sanctification so bountifully prepared for them, they are assiduous in prayer, they endeavour to fulfil their duties faithfully, they fulfil their worldly avocations in a spirit of submission to the Divine dispensations, they combat their passions

and avoid all dangerous occasions of evil, and they bear patiently the various trials incident to their state. Their steps are thus happily directed to the everlasting kingdom. But how unwise are, on the other hand, the lovers of this world! Their mind and heart are engrossed with vain desires and pursuits, they neglect the service of God and the needs of their soul, and they fall into many sins. They know not how soon death may overtake them; but no preparation is made for it. Would that such men might perceive their folly before it is too late!

Devout Christian, be not unmindful of the uncertainty of your life, or of the purpose for which God has bestowed it upon you. So live that you may confidently hope to realize the Divine promises of a heavenly reward hereafter. You have not here a lasting city. St. Paul says that the time is short, and that it remaineth that they that use this world be as if they used it not, 'for the fashion of this world passeth away' (1 Cor. vii. 31). Put yourself once more under Mary's care and protection, and beseech her by her powerful intercession to save you from all the dangers of the world, and to help you to direct your life to the attainment of your heavenly destiny.

January 3.

INNOCENCE OF LIFE.

I. It would almost seem that many Christians consider that innocence of life is to be expected only in the condition or period of childhood. What, however, should result from the bountiful bestowal of grace, from maturer judgment, from greater steadiness of character, from fuller knowledge, from a more rational appreciation of religion, from a wider experience, and from a frequent reception of the Holy Sacraments? Should not these advantages yield fruit in solid piety and in a more perfect life? The fact is, that as men grow older, if they only use the means of sanctification bountifully provided for them, they should become in every way better. All Christians should aim at innocence of life. David asks: 'Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place?' and he answers: 'The innocent in hands, and clean of heart' (Ps. xxiii. 3, 4). God praised Job because of his innocence, saying: 'There is none like him in the earth, a man simple, and upright, and fearing God, and avoiding evil, and still keeping his innocence' (Job ii. 3). God loved Job and He blessed him; and David says: 'He will not deprive of good things them that walk in innocence' (Ps. lxxxiii. 13). True servants of God would rather die than offend God by mortal sin, and they hate all the ways of evil.

Devout Christian, aim ever at innocence of life. Strive never to offend God even by lesser sins, and you will not fall into those that are greater. Recognize that as you grow older you ought to become better, and pray for grace ever to love the ways of innocence.

II. Innocence has its first foundation in a lively faith, but it will not be maintained without a sincere love of

God, the Chief and Sovereign Good, and the Author of all holiness. From this sincere love proceed that guilelessness and love of virtue which God praised in holy Job, and which mark the true servants of God. Christians cannot pretend to seek to please God while they make little of offending Him. Those who truly love innocence have a horror of sin, and they strenuously and perseveringly avoid all the ways of evil. Wisdom and discretion are necessary to innocence of life. If Christians would attain to it, they must put away vain and dangerous thoughts and imaginations, they must check and moderate their wayward affections, they must keep a guard over their senses, and they must not be intimate with persons of irreligious life, or of lax principles, conversation, or manners. While carefully avoiding what might be prejudicial in any way to innocence, they should cultivate the practices of a devout life, by which innocence will be fostered and maintained. Happy are those Christians who regulate their life by these necessary principles.

Devout Christian, love the atmosphere of virtue and piety, and your soul will feel the attraction of holiness. God has His ways of drawing you to Himself. You belong to Him, and not to the world or to any creature in the world. Do not rob God of that true service to which He is entitled at all times; it consists not only in avoiding evil, but also in truly loving Him and in doing all His will. 'Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord' (Ps. cxviii. 1).

III. By innocence of life Christians are happily associated with all the just on earth, and with the Saints in glory, and they are the object of God's love and blessings (Prov. ii. 7, 8). It is written: 'Justice keepeth the way of the innocent' (Prov. xiii. 6). Their innocence establishes them in the way of a good life from which they will not easily depart, and it produces its effects upon their mind and character. We see in such Christians an uprightness of intention, a simplicity and an honesty of action, and a genuineness of piety, which render them worthy of admiration and of imitation. It may be said that in their

case religiousness of conduct marks their lives and enters into everything. From all this there happily follow peace of conscience and spiritual strength and constancy. Who will not desire these comforting results and blessings? Why will men go in the ways of sin and shirk the holy yoke of a devout Christian life? Do they not prepare for themselves bitterness, disappointment, uneasiness, and dissatisfaction?

Devout Christian, look ever upon innocence of life as a treasure most earnestly to be desired, and one to be guarded most carefully. Beg of God to bestow this precious grace upon you. Consecrate your heart to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to Mary Immaculate. Beseech your heavenly Mother to obtain for you the grace to set your heart only upon what is good and pleasing to God, so that you may never find satisfaction in anything else.

January 4.

GROWING IN GRACE.

I. Christians by their good works and by their patience under trial, as well as by the fruits of the Holy Sacraments they receive, obtain an increase of sanctifying grace. They should be constant in their effort to increase their grace. St. Peter says : ' Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ' (2 St. Pet. iii. 18). As they advance in age Christians should become firmer in their faith. Faith, like other gifts and talents, is measured out to men according to God's inscrutable decrees ; but there are reasons why it should become firmer. With our increasing age our judgment matures, and supernatural truths become more firmly fixed in our mind. Consequently our religious convictions should become stronger. Experience adds its weight to strengthen our convictions. For instance, we see the sad results of unbelief and of errors in religion, and we admire the Divine protection over the Church in every age, and the glorious work done by the Church in the world for the well-being and salvation of men. There is also personal experience of the benefits of religion. Faith itself is based upon the authority of God, and does not depend upon human approval ; but incidentally these various experiences, and men's long holding of it, exercise a beneficial influence upon the mind, and help men to realize more fully the blessings attached to this supernatural gift.

Devout Christian, hold ever more and more firmly the truths of Divine revelation, so that you may be said to grow in this grace of faith (Col. i. 10). Thank God for the holy and comforting enlightenment it bestows upon you, lifting your mind high above all error, doubt, and uncertainty.

II. St. Peter says: 'Grow in grace.' Should we not grow in our hope and trust in God? Yes; with our advancing years our hope should be more firmly established; not, indeed, because God becomes more worthy of it—for He is ever infinitely worthy of it—but because of the many lessons that confirm us in our confidence in Him. We cannot add anything to the gifts of God, but we can turn these gifts ever more and more to account. This is shown to be so in the parable of the pounds. The lord said: 'Trade till I come' (St. Luke xix. 13). One of the ten servants (who everyone received a pound) gained ten pounds, and another gained five pounds. This gain was made gradually by using the money profitably. Aided by grace we may turn to good account God's gifts to us. We may become stronger in our confidence in God; we may become as it were more fully impregnated with it. It is not enough that the rain should fall upon the ground: it must sink into it, and the soil must be impregnated with it; then will the plants derive benefit from it. The longer we live the more fully should we become convinced of God's love of us, and of His wonderful mercy, and the larger, too, becomes our experience of the benefits of redemption. All this should confirm our hope in God, and lead us to exercise this supernatural virtue in a more unbounded manner in all our needs and trials. The more abundant the proofs are of God's goodness, the more lively should be our trust in Him: these proofs are lavished on us day by day.

Devout Christian, let it be your comfort, as it is your duty, to put all your trust in God. Holy David says: 'Oh, taste and see that the Lord is sweet: blessed is the man that hopeth in Him' (Ps. xxxiii. 9). Grow ever in a lively confidence in Him; the more fully and constantly you experience God's helps, mercies, and blessings, the fuller should be your trust in Him.

III. Christians should love God ever more and more; they must not, even for one moment, cease to love Him. God has His demands upon every moment of our lives; not always in what has Himself directly for object, but

we must never act contrary to the love we owe Him. He may tolerate our unfaithfulness to our duty towards Him, but He can never sanction it. We must grow in love until we love Him with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength (St. Mark xii. 30). What a rapid and solid growth in love should follow the ceaseless flow of graces from God's bounty, the often renewed application to our souls of Christ's saving merits, and His ever constant advocacy with His Father, the unwearying operations of the Holy Spirit, the powerful intercession of Mary and of our holy Patrons, and the ever watchful care of our guardian Angels! As our indebtedness to God becomes ever, day by day, greater, should we not feel ourselves drawn by ever stronger bonds to love Him? Our Lord said: 'Abide in My love' (St. John xv. 9). We must not fall off in our love; we should desire ever to love God more and more, and we should give proofs of this desire in our increased devotedness in God's service, and in our ever more practical effort to avoid everything that might offend Him.

Devout Christian, pray for an increase of charity. Nothing can so fully satisfy your heart's desires, or give you so much true delight, as the love of God. Be eager to excel in this love, and to be ever in union with the Angels and Saints, and with all the just in offering God the homage of your fervent love. Ask Mary to obtain for you a proper understanding of what God's love demands of you, and the grace of fidelity and zeal in meeting these demands.

January 5.

OBSTACLES TO GROWTH IN GRACE.

1. One of the obstacles to advancement in what concerns the spiritual welfare of Christians is their own thoughtlessness: they do not give it the attention it demands. This may arise from their not realizing their obligations in so important an affair, or from the preference they give to vain and worldly considerations. They seem not to recognize that what regards their sanctification regards also, in due measure and degree, their salvation. Do these Christians give time to reflect upon the teaching of the mysteries of their faith and religion, and upon the lessons to be derived from the doctrine of our Lord so clearly and attractively put forth in the Holy Gospels? Do they frame their principles and their conduct upon what is thus taught for the enlightenment and guidance of all Christians? Sometimes Christians are met with who seem to prefer the vanities and gains of this world to what tends to their happiness in the world to come. They give more thought and attention to the goods and pleasures of the world, to what will advance their position in society, and to the comforts of the body, than they give to the necessary duties of religion, and to what concerns the eternal interests of their soul. What unwisdom, what folly, there is in this conduct!

Devout Christian, have a thought, and a serious thought, for what concerns your soul's chief welfare. Let there be a persevering energy in religious earnestness. Do not allow yourself to be carried away by passing attractions or distractions. Do not set your heart upon what is trivial to the neglect of what is important. Let not vanity and worldliness rob your soul of the priceless treasures and gifts of grace.

II. Another cause of not progressing in spiritual life is ingratitude—acting in an ungrateful manner. This is seen in those who do not appreciate God's gifts, and in those who fail to thank Him for them. Men are ungrateful when they disregard the gifts of God's bounty and thus show a want of appreciation of them. When God of His gratuitous goodness bestows gifts upon men and opens to them means of advancing their spiritual welfare, He is moved to do this by His love, and He is guided by His infinite wisdom—a wisdom that weighs the benefit of what is designed, and that exquisitely accommodates the means to the end in view. Men are therefore ungrateful when they disregard what God so lovingly, so bountifully, and so wisely designs for their good. This ingratitude is seen in the neglect of the means of grace so abundantly provided in the Church, among which means are the Holy Sacraments. Other men prove themselves ungrateful who fail to thank God for all His gifts and blessings, and for the graces imparted by the Holy Sacraments. There are even men who depart farther from God according as His providence prospers their worldly condition. Ungrateful men of both these classes begin soon to find prayer insipid, to lose relish for piety, and to quit the ways of a devout life ; for God detests ingratitude, and He punishes it by staying the profuse flow of His bounties.

Devout Christian, cease not to thank God for His many gifts and mercies. When you have received any of the Holy Sacraments, do not omit to make a fervent thanksgiving. When you assist at Holy Mass, offer up the Divine Victim of the Altar as a precious thank-offering. Say often with David : ' Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He hath done for thee ' (Ps. cii. 2).

III. A third obstacle to spiritual progress is moral weakness, or failure to struggle effectually against sin. When men are attached to particular faults and do not endeavour seriously to correct them, and when they persistently expose themselves to commit them, their faulty dispositions and conduct become habitual, and they impede the operations of grace. Again, there is often neglect. When

men fail to feed their soul by prayer, and to employ other means which bring them spiritual strength, there will ensue moral weakness, and they will become an easy prey to their evil passions. Can it be said that these men are fighting the battle of life as it should be fought? Are they not often overcome? Their failure to struggle effectually and constantly against sin, and to employ the necessary means, diverts from their soul many precious graces, and thus causes detriment to their spiritual welfare. In some cases such men fall from grace; they begin by being negligent servants, and they end by becoming rebels.

Devout Christian, make no compromise at any time with what is evil and displeasing to God; and cease not to struggle with your weaknesses, lest they gain mastery over you. All sins, even the least, are an impediment to grace. Dread any persistency in the commission of venial sins. Bring God to your aid by fervent prayer. Beg of Mary, the model of sanctity, to obtain for you a zeal for your spiritual welfare, and the grace of spiritual enlightenment that you may always understand what conduct will be wisest and best, and most pleasing to God.

January 6.

THE EPIPHANY.

I. In her office of the Feast of the Epiphany, Holy Church sings with David: 'Before Him the Ethiopians shall fall down. . . . The kings of Tharsis and the islands shall offer presents: the kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring gifts: And all the kings of the earth shall adore Him: all nations shall serve Him' (Ps. lxxi. 9-11). The kings and the nations were represented in Bethlehem when the Wise Men came from afar with their gifts to offer their worship to the heavenly King, who had descended to earth to save both Jews and Gentiles. We admire in the conduct of the shepherds, and of the Wise Men, their correspondence with grace; and we note with joy and satisfaction the blessings with which their correspondence was rewarded. They bestirred themselves, and went at once to verify the truth of the happy tidings they had received, and which they firmly believed, and to offer their homage. God led the Wise Men by a star. They asked in Jerusalem: 'Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and are come to adore Him.' Our Lord Himself was the true Light: 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men' (St. John i. 4). He said of Himself: 'Yet a little while, the Light is among you. . . . Whilst you have the Light, believe in the Light' (St. John xii. 35, 36). And holy Simeon, while holding Him as an infant in his arms, had declared in prophecy that He was a light to the revelation of the Gentiles (St. Luke ii. 32). The Wise Men, led appropriately by the star, came to the light; they believed, they adored, and they carried the faith to their own nations.

Devout Christians, you commemorate in the call of the Wise Men the call of your forefathers to the light of the

true faith. Pray that you may ever live in that holy and comforting light. Thank God for the gift of faith, and strive ever to walk according to its heavenly guidance.

II What a contrast to the conduct of the Wise Men was that of the cruel Herod! This wily king, fearful of losing his throne, became the victim of his own malice, and he embittered his heart against his Lord and Saviour. He did not accompany the Wise Men to Bethlehem, but he held back and prepared snares for the life of the Divine Infant. The Wise Men in all their conduct displayed dispositions necessary to the successful operations of grace: they were humble, they were obedient. Witness these dispositions in the readiness with which they followed the inspiration conveyed by the star, and undertook a long and inconvenient journey; and again in their spirit of faith manifested in presence of the Divine Child. The star led them, not to a palace, but to a stable. They entered the lowly shelter, and they discovered there, with no show of royalty or greatness, but in the poorest surroundings, an Infant. They acknowledged this Infant as the King Whom they had come so far to see and to worship. They prostrated themselves in adoration before Him. Who shall say how profound was their emotion, and how pronounced were their sentiments of humility and love? 'They found the Child with Mary His Mother, and falling down they adored Him.' Let us not be among those who demur to acknowledge true worth or greatness when there is no exterior pomp. With all humility and with a vivid sense of interior lowliness, the Wise Men prostrate themselves before the Divine Infant, irrespective of the mean surroundings and of what men might say.

Devout Christian, strive to understand all the bearings of this mystery of God's condescension, and look with admiration on the conduct of the Wise Men. Join yourself in spirit with them in their visit to the Holy Family, and address fervent prayers to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Praise God with David, saying: 'Sing ye to the Lord a new canticle: sing to the Lord, all the earth. . . . Declare His

glory among the Gentiles : His wonders among all people ' (Ps. xcv. 1, 3).

III. Having adored the new-born King, the Wise Men proceed to prove the sincerity of their faith and worship by offering Him suitable gifts. This they did with the generosity which the occasion demanded. ' Opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts ; gold, frankincense, and myrrh.' St. Bernard contemplates the scene with admiration, and exclaims : ' What do you, O Wise Men ? You adore a child at the breast found in a stable, and wrapped in swaddling clothes. Is, then, this infant God ? God resides in His temple, and the Lord is on His throne : " The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in Heaven " (Ps. x. 5). You seek Him in a stable in the arms of His Mother. What then do you ? Why do you also offer Him gold ? Is He then a king ? Where are His magnificent palace, His throne, His court, His courtiers ? Is His palace nothing but a stable ? and His throne only a manger ? Are Joseph and Mary His numerous court ?' The uncouthness and chilliness of the stable, and the poverty of its furniture, did not weaken the charity of the Wise Men, but stimulated it. St. James says that faith without works is dead (ii., 20, 26) ; such was not the faith of the Wise Men. By their generous offerings they proved the sincerity and warmth of their homage, and pronounced their belief in our Lord as their God, their King, and their Redeemer. God has at all times demanded offerings and sacrifices from His creatures, as part of the homage due to Him from Whom all things are. Christians of the present day are not exempt from satisfying this demand.

Devout Christian, give according to your means towards the support of religion. Renew your faith in our Lord's Divinity and Sovereignty. Rejoice in the satisfaction given Him by the worship and gifts of the Wise Men. Beseech Mary to present you to Jesus as she presented to Him the Wise Men, and to plead with Him on your behalf for a lively faith and a generous charity.

January 7.

THE CALL OF THE MAGI.

I. While we are still celebrating the great Festival of the Epiphany, let us study some of the lessons it suggests to us. Let us learn from the Wise Men that we should promptly and fully correspond with grace. But what shall we say about grace, that we may understand that it is our duty to correspond with it? God, all-sufficient in Himself, so that nothing can add to the perfection of His Being, is quiescent in Himself; but he is yet ever operating in us. Everywhere amongst us, as God is there, there is Divine action. In the supernatural order we term this the working of His grace. By grace our soul feels in some manner the touch, support, inspiration, light, and relish of God. In Heaven God's work is one of glorification, but on earth one of reparation; but both in Heaven and on earth His own glory is the necessary end of His action. Everything in us that is opposed to this Divine end is a perversion detestable in His eyes, and merits His punishment according to the measure of the malice prompting our action. Everything in us which proceeds from the action of His grace is meritorious in His eyes, for we therein, in some manner and measure, co-operate in promoting His glory. It was grace which, in a wonderful way, wrought the conversion of the Wise Men, and brought them to believe in the mystery of the Incarnation, and to worship our Lord in Bethlehem. If they had not corresponded with grace, they would have opposed the Divine designs.

Devout Christian, be not indifferent to the many movements of grace by which God would help you to attain the perfection of your calling. By corresponding with grace you will give glory to Him.

II. It is said that the Wise Men studied the stars ; but however that may have been, God called them to Bethlehem by means of a star of unusual magnitude and brilliancy. The Wise Men lost no time in following the star, and at the same time their minds were enlightened as to the purport of this sign, and they were conscious of an interior impulse to follow its guidance. They rightly regarded the star as a heavenly messenger, the medium to them of a Divine call. We have to admire their prompt and religious correspondence with this call. What a reproach to many Christians, who disregard the inspirations of grace, their prompt correspondence should be ! Christians enlightened by faith, confirmed in knowledge by many past experiences, are yet slow to follow those holy promptings and helps so bountifully vouchsafed to them, to lead them to what is good, wise, and profitable, or to draw them in the way of a more perfect life. Should they not, with gratitude, seek to follow them promptly and effectively? We admire the conduct of the Wise Men all the more when we reflect they did not know in what direction the star might lead them, or how long the journey might be : they trusted in the providence of God. Thus, too, should we have confidence in the Divine arrangements, when, faithful to grace, we correspond with God's inspirations. Will not God provide everything in wisdom ? (Gen. xxii. 8).

Devout Christian, reproach yourself if you have disregarded God's inspirations, or if you have ever held back through misgiving about the ways and means, or the issue. Be animated with a trust like that of holy Job when he declared : ' Although He should kill me, I will trust in Him ' (Job xiii. 15). God brings everything to the issue provided in His eternal designs.

III. The star leads the Wise Men to Jerusalem. What is now their conduct ? Since they had so far borne patiently and uncomplainingly the fatigues, difficulties, and dangers of the journey, and since their way, under God's protection, had been prosperous, strengthened now by a confidence and an assurance grown of this heavenly protection, they approach Herod's city intrepid and undismayed. At the

risk of giving offence to Herod, they yet make inquiries concerning the new-born King. We witness in their conduct a holy perseverance, a courageous persistence, in pursuing their call. They are told that the expected Messias should be born in Bethlehem. They are now within easy reach of the end of their journey and of the realization of its object. God rewards their persevering efforts and continual correspondence with grace. The star which had been lost to sight reappears, and finally guides them to the stable which was still the home of the Holy Family. 'Seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary His Mother.' They offered their homage and their gifts ; and then as a further token of the Divine protection, they were directed how to return to their country so as to escape the wiles and evil machinations of the cruel Herod.

Devout Christian, learn from the conduct of these holy men that you must be bold in overcoming all obstacles to grace, and that you must persevere in your correspondence with it. God will help you, and He will bring to effect and to a successful issue all His designs in your regard. Ask Mary, 'Mother of Divine Grace,' to obtain for you the true and constant spirit of perseverance.

January 8.

SUBMISSION TO FAITH—I.

I. When God, who is Truth itself, speaks, we must receive His words as absolutely true. We must deem them true before we understand them and before we examine them, because they cannot be otherwise than true. Their truth does not depend upon any act of our reasoning: they are true in their origin, and before they are submitted to us. Since God does not Himself speak to us with an audible voice, but sends His message through another, this does not take away, alter, or diminish the truth of His message. We must receive the words and meaning of the message as absolutely true, because of their origin. St. Paul says: 'God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all, In these days hath spoken to us by His Son' (Heb. i. 1, 2). In every case the Divine word that was spoken was absolutely true. The words and teaching of the Son of God are conveyed to us through the Church; for He said to His Apostles: 'He that heareth you, heareth Me' (St. Luke x. 16); 'Going, therefore, teach ye all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you' (St. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). All men, all nations, are bound to submit to the Sovereign Truth, and to receive God's message through His Church. The teaching of Truth itself is communicated through that message. To reject the message would be an act of rebellion against the Divine Authority: 'He that despiseth you, despiseth Me.'

Devout Christian, rejoice and be thankful that God deigns to send you the saving message. Love every word as a word of truth and enlightenment. Submit yourself to Christ's teaching. Admire its clearness, wisdom, and sublimity.

II. Christ, as our Sovereign King and as the Sovereign Truth, demands the submission of our mind to His teaching, and, as we have seen, this teaching reaches us through His one true Church (St. Matt. xvi. 18). There are many mysteries in our holy faith and religion; St. Paul says that 'we see now through a glass in a dark manner' (1 Cor. xiii. 12); but we must yet submit to all Christ's teaching when once it has been sufficiently proposed to us, even though it be incomprehensible. Our submission to faith, brought about by God's grace, is an act of religion; it is an act of holy and meritorious submission to Christ's Sovereignty. Our reasoning lends no degree of truth to the Divine teaching, which is absolutely true in itself; and we believe it upon the authority of God from whom it emanates. To the worldly, un-Christian philosopher it may seem hard that our mind, which is naturally inclined to seek the reason of everything, should have to yield assent in these matters of faith, not to the convictions arrived at by our reason, but to the teaching of Christ irrespective of such conviction. Yet this is what God demands of us. Upon Christ's word, and only upon His word, we must believe to be true what we are unable to judge so, owing to our limited knowledge; and we must adhere and assent to what we do not understand, even as though it came within the range of our mental comprehension. It would be presumption on our part, and an insult to our Lord, to pretend not to receive His teaching as true until we have submitted it to the pronouncement of our own reason.

Devout Christian, embrace the whole teaching of Christ with a devout and docile mind. He will not teach you anything contrary to reason, but many sublime and consoling truths which are above the range of man's limited understanding.

III. We may learn a lesson of submission to faith from that of the converts made by the Apostles and their successors. These converts came from every rank of society, and many were men of learning; the minds and hearts of many had been corrupted by the vain philosophies and predominant vices of the age. Yet these men accepted the

sublime truths of the Christian faith, and, aided by grace, brought their lives into conformity with Christian morality. How are we to account for this submission on their part? St. Paul says that it was accomplished by 'bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ' (2 Cor. x. 5). These converts bent themselves under the yoke of Christ; they submitted to His gospel. In this way Christ's kingdom on earth had its beginnings; and owing to the same submission to the Divine authority of His word, it made progress. The same submission is necessary now; and it is the absence of this necessary submission which accounts for religious errors, darkness, and doubts. There will not be a return to truth and unity until men understand that their minds must be brought into captivity under the one yoke of obedience to Christ's holy doctrine. Where this submission exists, men are preserved from error, and are guided by Divine Truth; but when men seek to become their own teachers, they fall from error into error.

Devout Christian, beware of pride of intellect, and of religious independence. Let Christ be your Master. To Mary it was said: 'Blessed art thou that hast believed' (St. Luke i. 45). Ask her to obtain for you firmness and constancy in professing the faith of her Divine Son, that you may deserve to be numbered among His disciples.

January 9.

SUBMISSION TO FAITH—II.

I. We recognize that Christ's Sovereignty and Truth demand of us unconditional submission. We must submit our mind to His gospel. This holy gospel is made known to us by His Church. The Church founded by Christ, and duly appointed to teach all nations, has Divinely-given authority both to teach and to demand our assent to her teaching. Christ's true followers both belong to the Church and submit to her, because Christ has ordered this submission. It belongs to the Church to propose to us the truths of God's revelation, and we on our part are bound to believe these truths when sufficiently proposed to us. St. Cyprian teaches that the Church is the depository, the organ, and the interpreter of truth. This is to say, that Christ's teaching has been confided to her, and that it is her office to preserve it, to announce it, and to elucidate it. God Himself has fitted the Church for this office and mission, and He preserves her from error. She is therefore infallible in her teaching. Whoever knowingly rejects her doctrine thereby sins against Christ's Sovereignty ; for Christ commands us to hear His Church. Even as a prince requires his subjects to respect and obey not only his own voice, but also the voice of those who speak in his name, so does our Lord require us to submit ourselves to His Church.

Devout Christian, acknowledge thankfully the Divine arrangement by which our Lord's teaching reaches you. It reaches you in all its truth through the Church. Pray that your faith may be firm, entire, and constant ; only by such a faith will you submit yourself dutifully to Christ and to His Church.

II. Let us carefully avoid all faults opposed to that submission to faith which our Lord rightly demands of us. It

would be wrong to endeavour, through a vain curiosity or through pride of intellect, to fathom the sublime mysteries revealed by God, such as the mysteries of the Trinity and the Eucharist. It would be wrong to withhold our assent to the articles of faith until by the application of philosophical or scientific principles we have attempted to satisfy ourselves as to their truth ; for truths in the supernatural order, while not contrary to those principles when rightly understood, are not necessarily to be explained by them ; and our conduct would offer a slight to that Authority which demands our assent. It would be decidedly wrong to doubt the truth of any of the dogmas of the Church, or to discuss those dogmas in a manner or spirit that would show disrespect for the authority of the Church. It would be wrong to take our views of religious truths from non-Catholic sources, especially from irreligious newspapers, books, or pamphlets. While avoiding such faults, we should at the same time endeavour to derive instruction from hearing the Word of God, from studying in an approved way the Holy Scriptures, particularly the New Testament, and from reading approved books treating of doctrine or spiritual subjects.

Devout Christian, avoid those schools of thought in which reason would seek to dominate over faith, and ever love the simplicity of Catholic teaching. Remember our Lord's words : ' Amen, I say to you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter into it ' (St. Mark x. 15) ; ' Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones ' (St. Matt. xi. 25).

III. When we grasp the truth that what the Church teaches, and authoritatively teaches, is what God has revealed, and that God preserves her from error, we cannot but recognize our duty to submit our minds to her teaching, and we further recognize the wisdom of doing this. Evidence of this wisdom is supplied by the spectacle of unity in belief witnessed in the Church, contrasted with divergence in belief seen in the Sects. In the Church, too, there is sameness, firmness, and constancy of teaching, whereas in

the Sects religious views change; and where there is no fixedness of belief there cannot be certainty. As God is the Author of the truths of revelation, and as He preserves from error the Church which He has appointed and authorized to teach us those truths, this necessarily demands that there should be unity in belief. The submission of all the faithful to the one Authority accounts for the admirable unity of belief witnessed in the Church; for authority is the keystone of unity. Alas that men, led by pride or other passions, have departed from that unity! Let no tempter deceive us, so as to cause our faith even to waver. If, supported by grace, we are staunch to our faith, then will the foundation of religion in us be firm, and we shall be saved from the misery of error, doubt, or misgiving.

Devout Christian, thank God for the inestimable gift of the true faith. Hold fast to the principles which should shield that gift from danger. Recognize the duty of docility to the Church (St. Matt. xviii. 17). Let it not appear to you inglorious to submit your mind to the truth; and ever account as lamentably wrong that principle which demands freedom from authority in matters of doctrine; for God Himself has established such an authority. Beg of Mary to obtain for you the grace of being ever dutifully docile to the Church, and of ever loving its holy teaching. Pray for the spread of the sacred light of faith.

January 10.

OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S DEMANDS.

I. Our Lord's Sovereignty over us requires on our part a ready and entire compliance with all His commandments; and this compliance He asks of us in token of our love of Him. He says: 'If you love Me, keep My commandments' (St. John xiv. 15). Christians have renounced all allegiance to Satan and the world, that Christ may be their Master. Alas! they are not always true to Him. What is prescribed for them by the commandments of God and of His Church is holy, profitable, and desirable; but animated by a spirit of indifference, or overcome by sloth, or led by passion, they disregard these commandments, and thereby load their soul with guilt, and bring upon themselves misery and punishment. Perhaps they adduce vain excuses and pretexts for their disobedience and rebellion against God's Sovereignty. Do they not advance the demands of their personal honour against God's prohibition to avenge themselves? Do they not advance the claims of society, urbanity, and reasonable relaxation, when their duty to God and to their souls forbids them to associate with certain persons, to frequent certain places, or demands time for the practices of religion? Do they not excuse themselves for neglecting to perform works of penance, or to make restitution, on the plea of inability, when the real reason is their unwillingness? We may ask, What power rules over their will? Do they admit God's Sovereignty, and submit dutifully to it? Or do they not rather follow the instincts of their own immortification, pride, sensuality, or sloth?

Devout Christian, do not submit yourself to any of these base masters; but, because you love our Lord, subject your will to His holy, wise, and profitable demands upon your

service. It is written: 'Him only shalt thou serve' (St. Matt. iv. 10).

II. When men disobey God's commands, they act contrary to their own best interests, for God's requirements are always wise and profitable. God seeks His own glory and the benefit of His creatures; He is essentially and infinitely wise and good. His law is not burdensome nor oppressive; and we are not left without the help necessary to make it easy of accomplishment. Grace will attract us, help us, and support us, in the fulfilment of God's will. Listen to holy David in the 118th Psalm. Among other words professing his love of God's law, he says: 'O how have I loved Thy law, O Lord! it is my meditation all the day. Through Thy commandment, Thou hast made me wiser than my enemies.... Therefore have I loved Thy commandments above gold and the topaz. Therefore was I directed to all Thy commandments: I have hated all wicked ways' (Ps. cxviii. 97, 98, 127, 128). If our Heavenly Master puts a yoke upon His subjects, it is a sweet one; if He also places a burden on them, it is a light one (St. Matt. xi. 29,30). What He commands is useful; what He forbids is hurtful. Should it be deemed a hardship to be required to restrain our passions which lead to harm, misery, and ruin? or to give time to prayer, to assisting at Mass, and to receiving the Holy Sacraments, all which holy duties bring us spiritual help and heavenly blessings? And does not the observance of the commandments by others save us from many evils, from injury and injustice? If for this reason we value their observance by others, shall we not recognize the necessity of observing them ourselves?

Devout Christian, keep from your mind even the very thought of breaking any of God's commandments. When your conscience tells you that God forbids a certain act, obey—do not do it. When your conscience tells you that God's commandments require you to perform a certain act, obey—do it. But ever pray your Heavenly Father for the grace you need to do His will. Love His holy will, and it will be your pleasure to do it; and doing it will always conduce to your joy and to your peace.

III. The Divine law is not without its sanction. Because sinners will not obey it, God does not therefore lose the rights of His Sovereignty; His commands may not be disregarded with impunity. He Who as King and Master has the right to impose obedience, has also the right and power both to recompense those who execute His commands with dutifulness, and to punish those who transgress His orders. It would be better to obey now than to have to submit hereafter to the terrible punishment of disobedience. Sinners who disregard God's law now will be powerless to escape hereafter the just punishment of their sins. Let the exceeding and everlasting reward of the just move us to obey, in all things and readily, the commandments of God. David says: 'Thou hast commanded Thy commandments to be kept most diligently. . . . With my whole heart have I sought after Thee: let me not stray from Thy commandments' (Ps. cxviii. 4, 10); and again: 'The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls . . . the commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening the eyes. . . . For Thy servant keepeth them, and in keeping them there is a great reward' (Ps. xviii. 8-12). The just are always happy in regulating their conduct by the requirements of God's law, and their great sorrow is when they have failed to do this. They recognize in God, Who imposes His law upon them, the best of Fathers, the wisest of Legislators, and the most generous of Sovereigns.

Devout Christian, regret all your unfaithfulness in keeping God's commandments. Be more dutiful in the future. Your present happiness and your future reward depend upon your observance of God's law. Be prepared to obey it at any cost. Ask Mary, who was ever the most obedient of God's creatures while she is yet the sublimest, to obtain for you the grace to imitate her obedience, and to bring your whole conduct at all times into conformity with the Divine will.

January 11.

FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST.

I. Our Divine Lord graciously invites His followers to learn of Him and to walk in His sacred footsteps. How few are the Christians who seek seriously to comply with this invitation. Self-indulgence, worldliness, sloth, and inordinate love of creatures, hold men back from the attempt to imitate their Divine Master and Model. Our Lord says : ' If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me ' (St. Matt. xvi. 24). Self-indulgence is inconsistent with Christian perfection, and is always a drawback to spiritual progress. Our Lord condemns it both by His words and by His example. It had no place in the lives of the Saints, nor will it have any place in the lives of earnest Christians. We should all desire to follow our Lord, and never to be separated from Him. If we are His followers, we should be prepared to suffer with Him, to be humble with Him, and to share His humiliations and to be patient with Him ; and with Him we should be at war with every form of evil. Let us say to Him what Ethai the Gethite said to David when he was fleeing from his son Absalom : ' In what place soever thou shalt be, lord my king, either in death, or in life, there will thy servant be ' (2 Kings xv. 21).

Devout Christian, take your stand dutifully by your Lord, or walk diligently in His footsteps. Condemn in yourself whatever is opposed to the true spirit and character of a devout Christian life. Disregard the adverse criticisms and the opposition of the self-indulgent and worldly, who are not your guides and who have no claim upon your compliance with their ideas. But listen to our Lord, Who says to you : ' Learn of Me.'

II. The world is at fault in its choice of a leader, and in

the ends it proposes to itself. It seems not to study nor to take into account more than the present uncertain and passing satisfactions which attend its pursuits, and it loses sight of the everlasting future. Our Lord's followers are wiser : they consider rather the future gain than any immediate results. They bear patiently their present trials because of the heavenly reward they lead to ; they withstrain themselves now from seeking inordinately the pleasures of the world, as these might deprive them of joys and delights without end. Our Lord, Who invites His followers to the present combat, leads them to a final and everlasting triumph. But before realizing this happy consummation of their hopes, they are wise now in walking by the guidance of our Lord's teaching, and in availing themselves of the means of grace by which they are saved from moral disaster, and brought into some imitation of their Divine Master. They love our Lord with true and strong spiritual affection, having for its firm foundation a lively faith ; and they wish ever to be bound to His service. They think with spiritual relish and consolation of His love of them manifested in so many ways, but especially in His Sacred Passion and in the Holy Eucharist, and of His gentleness, compassion, tenderness, generosity, and mercy. Drawn thus to Him, they find His yoke sweet and His burden light, while they are passing through this land of their exile ; and they are buoyed up and maintained in constancy by His promises of everlasting life.

Devout Christian, be ever a true follower of Christ. Leave to others the vanities and passing satisfactions which the world offers, but strive yourself to make sure of heavenly and everlasting blessings.

III. St. Paul inculcates the necessity of aiming at imitation of our Lord, where, having told the Romans to put off the works of darkness, he goes on to say : ' But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ ' (Rom. xiii. 14). That we may be numbered among His followers we must prove ourselves Christians by the Christian character of our thoughts, principles, conversations, and conduct. To be Christ's disciples we must live in mutual charity with one another

(St. John xiii. 35). Let us put on the modesty of Jesus Christ in our speech, then there will be no scandalous discourses or words of double meaning; let us put on the humility and meekness of Jesus Christ in our conduct, then there will be no haughtiness, and no anger; and let the mortification of Jesus Christ rule over our sensual appetite, and there will be no intemperance or impurity. If we fail in these respects to imitate our Divine Model, there will stand against us our Lord's sentence: 'He that taketh not up his cross, and followeth Me, is not worthy of Me' (St. Matt. x. 38). Worldlings and sinners refuse to undergo a little that seems hard and bitter now; but how much that is really so will they not have to submit to hereafter, if they do not bring themselves under the sweet yoke of Christ!

Devout Christian, be loyal to your Heavenly King, Who gave His life for you, and Who deigned to live on earth to be your Model. Pray that you may show forth His virtues. St. Paul was able to say: 'Thanks be to God, Who always maketh us to triumph in Christ Jesus, and manifesteth the odour of His knowledge by us in every place. For we are the good odour of Christ unto God' (2 Cor. ii. 14, 15). Ask Mary, the most faithful imitatrix of her Divine Son, to obtain for you the grace ever to walk in His footsteps, and to show forth in your conduct the excellence of His gospel and the fruits of His grace.

January 12.

CHRISTIAN SELF-RESTRAINT.

I. Reflect that the practice of virtue must ever be attended by the practice also of self-restraint. This is owing to the dangerous character of man's natural inclinations. Just as the fleet steed must be held well in hand by means of bridle and bit, so must man's conduct be guarded by self-restraint. Liberty without this precaution will easily degenerate into licence; and without it laudable projects will be ruined, and well-meaning efforts will come to naught. Self-restraint must become a habit, if Christians would walk wisely and well. Those who do not restrain their thoughts, their imaginations, their affections, their antipathies, their desires, their appetites, their words, their senses, and their actions, but allow these unrestrained liberty, will fall not only into many imperfections, but even into grievous sins. How will such Christians as these practise Christian self-denial, charity, humility, and piety? How can they be expected to resist sin when they are exposed to temptation? or to escape the many snares of Satan and of evil passion which are a danger even to more perfect Christians?

Recognize, devout Christian, the importance of self-restraint if you would not be carried away by inordinate and unruly inclinations that are opposed to humility, charity, temperance, and purity, and if you would be strong and firm when exposed to any danger to your soul. Self-restraint is of priceless value in the battle of life.

II. Self-restraint is dictated by the cardinal virtues of prudence and temperance. These lead men to act with circumspection and with moderation, teaching them to study the consequences of their actions, to adjust the means to the end in view, and to measure and direct wisely the

force and activity needed to attain this end. Christians who practise self-restraint do not rush unguardedly to an uncertain issue, but they guard themselves against what may prove to be evil ; they examine what is best to be said or done ; and they select the time, circumstances, and means which prudence suggests as most suitable. Their conduct, therefore, bears the stamp of wisdom, and it inspires respect and confidence. This is not the case when Christians do not restrain themselves, but act upon the impulse of their own waywardness, and when they are immortified, studying their own pleasure, and self-willed. Christians who do not practise self-restraint are often a spiritual danger to others, for in gratifying their own propensities they may become the occasion of sin to others, a stumbling-block and a snare, doing the work of God's enemy, leading others from the ways of virtue and from the path to Heaven.

Devout Christian, love ever the guidance of wisdom and prudence, and, by the help of God's grace, you will keep in order and under due subjection your unruly appetites. To satisfy them would be to expose yourself to spiritual misery and to various sins. Pray for the grace of Christian self-restraint.

III. Christians who do not practise self-restraint defend their conduct by saying that self-restraint would make them appear singular and unnatural, or that it would demand a constant watchfulness, something that could not be expected of them. These are specious excuses. How many men practise self-restraint in various ways in order to conform themselves to the etiquette of society, to further some much-sought end, or from a motive of policy, yet they are not deemed singular or unnatural. Should not, then, Christians practise it that they may guard themselves against evil, that they may not be a cause of scandal to their neighbour, and that their conduct may be pleasing to God ? And for the same ends, should they deem a constant watchfulness too great a demand upon their devotedness ? For do not men exercise a constant watchfulness to save themselves from temporal or bodily loss and injury ? Should Christians deem a little self-restraint too great a tax

when there is a question of virtue and grace, of spiritual welfare, of edification, and of the heavenly reward ?

Ponder, devout Christian, over these few considerations, and pray that you may have the grace ever to put the interests of God, of virtue, of religion, and of duty, in the first place, and in so noble a cause to watch over your natural inclinations so as to keep them in due subjection. And beg of Mary to obtain for you a true zeal for your spiritual interests, that you may ever wisely regulate your conduct so as to further them, and thus offer a pleasing service to God.

January 13.

OUR EMMANUEL.

I. The prophet foretold that our Divine Saviour would come amongst men to dwell with them, when he said of Him : 'His name shall be called Emmanuel' (Is. vii. 14). This wonderful condescension not only presents us with a convincing proof of God's love, but it also affords us impressive evidence of the reality of the Incarnation. Through the mystery of the Incarnation God draws near to us. St. John, in his Gospel and Epistles, strives to make us realize this consoling fact. He says : 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us' ; and this very same, he tells us (1 St. John i. 1), he himself heard, and saw, and gazed upon. The sacred Humanity of the Word of God is not merely a veil to conceal His Divinity ; but the Word of God has assumed it, and has united it (in His one Person) to His Divine nature—not, therefore, by the way of a mere corporeal form such as that assumed at times by Angels, but by an inseparable everlasting union. Through this sublime and consoling mystery of God made Man, God the Son as our Emmanuel came on earth, and manifested Himself to men. He dwelt among men, spoke to them, and taught them.

Admire then, devout Christian, this wonderful display of God's love and condescension, and cast yourself in spirit at the feet of Jesus Christ to worship Him as both God and Man. Thank Him for all He has accomplished for your salvation and happiness, and beseech Him to deign to accept you as His perpetual disciple and servant throughout your present life, and for all eternity. Beg that He will pour out upon your weak, fickle, and needy soul the graces and helps necessary to enable you to be ever faithful in your love and service of Him.

II. Endeavour now to realize how truly God came among men. When our Lord assumed our human nature, He took body and soul, and manifested Himself to men; having a human mind and a human will, a heart with which to love us, a face which men might gaze upon, a voice with which to speak to them, and hands and feet. Therefore did St. John say: 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled' (1 St. John i. 1). This same beloved disciple leaned upon the breast of his Lord at the Last Supper (St. John xiii. 23, 25); and Mary Magdalen had previously washed His sacred feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. His body was gashed, bruised, and pierced in His sacred Passion, and His blood flowed from His wounds until it was exhausted; then after His Resurrection the Apostles put their hands into the place of the wounds of His hands and side. How truly then our Lord became Man, and how real was His presence and life among men! Thus was He our Emmanuel.

Rejoice, devout Christian, with spiritual joy while considering the reality of this mystery of God the Son becoming truly Man, and be filled with trust and hope in Jesus Christ. Say confidently with David: 'The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?' (Ps. xxvi. 1). . . . 'The Lord is my helper and my protector' (Ps. xxvii. 7). Believe with a firm faith in your loving Saviour, and expect from His bountiful hands all the helps you need for your salvation. Praise Him for all His mercies and blessings, and pray for grace ever to co-operate with His designs in your regard.

III. Reflect now upon some of the blessings our Lord communicates by His dwelling with men. He deigns to fill them with the joy and consolation of His presence among them, He Himself taking pleasure at the same time in being with them. 'His delights were to be with the children of men' (Prov. viii. 31). The love of the Sacred Heart is manifested in countless ways, as in words of comfort and reassurance, and in discourses conveying enlightenment and guidance, in the display of compassionate

thoughtfulness, and in works of mercy and kindness. He became our Emmanuel, sharing men's sufferings and sorrows, dwelling with them in the land of their exile, and finally by His death taking away the bitterness of death. He dwelt among men to draw their hearts from what is evil, unwise, and unprofitable, and to attract them to Himself, and to what is good and wise. He dwelt among them to cast into their hearts the fire of Divine charity. Responsive to His grace, men should say : ' We will run after Thee to the odour of Thy ointments ' (Cant. i. 3). He came among men to enrich them in a wonderful way by making them sharers in His own infinite merits. All these blessings are communicated to every generation of men, and we all participate in them.

Wait, then, devout Christian, upon your loving Saviour with earnest and constant pleadings to His Sacred Heart, beseeching Him to enrich you, and ever to strengthen you with His graces, so that you may remain true to Him amid the temptations and dangers of this present life, and relish the blessings He has deigned to prepare for you. Put yourself once more under the protection of Mary, begging her prayers to obtain for you a true spirit of religion and constancy in the love and service of her Son.

January 14.

CHRIST OUR TEACHER.

I. THERE have always been Divine communications with men. The manifestations of God under the Old Dispensation were chiefly those of His providence and of His protection, but He also spoke to men through His prophets. His words and messages were, however, often deep and mysterious. Since the brief time of His communion with Adam in the Garden of Paradise God spoke directly but rarely to men. With the coming of Christ there began a new era of special Divine communications, and these were ever lucid and marvellously instructive. St. Paul says: 'God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days hath spoken to us by His Son' (Heb. i. 1, 2). And the Heavenly Father at our Lord's transfiguration said: 'Hear ye Him' (St. Matt. xvii. 5). Our teacher is not then any mere human philosopher, but the Son of God come among men to open to their minds the treasures of truth and of Divine teaching. He imparts His teaching by His discourses, by His example, and by His inspirations.

Long for, devout Christian, the lessons imparted by Jesus Christ, Who would not have His followers ignorant of the heavenly truths contained in His revelation, or uninstructed in the ways of Christian living. Do not listen to the seductive lessons of worldly wisdom, or to the clamours of dangerous passions, for these will lead you to what is foolish and evil; but be resolved ever to listen to, and to study, the teachings of the Divine Master, Who would lead you by His holy discipline in the way of everlasting life.

II. Reflect upon the teachings and the attractions of our Lord's life. Born in the world and living among men His life conveys holy and salutary lessons, and draws men to

admiration and love. Who is it that as an infant smiles upon Mary and clasps her with His tiny arms? Who is that child Whom Joseph nurses and protects? Who is that babe upon Whom the shepherds and the wise men look wonderingly while they worship? It is the Eternal God made Man, resting upon the bosom of His own creation, and placing Himself within the reach of His own creatures. What lessons Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the wise men learned from looking upon Him and studying the mystery of His coming! Time goes on. Who is that youth Who, sitting in the Temple, speaks words of more than human wisdom to the doctors of the law? Who, again, is the artisan working under Joseph at Nazareth, and growing into manhood in a humble condition of life? Then, Who is that Man of graceful mien Who, seated on the mount, announces to men the conditions of salvation, and teaches them lessons in exalted virtue, and Who continues to evangelize the people by the lake and in the wilderness, in the synagogues, and in country places? It is the very Son of God, living among His own people, and become their Teacher; it is the very Law-giver promulgating His own law.

Acknowledge, devout Christian, Christ as your only Teacher. Beseech Him to enlighten your mind with His heavenly doctrine, and beg of Him the grace ever to love it, and to make it your guide in holy living. Enlightened by Him you will not walk in darkness, nor will you be perplexed by uncertainty or doubt. Thank Him for the treasury of holy knowledge which He has opened to you by His teaching.

III. Reflect that our Lord by His teaching not only reveals to us the mysteries of the holy faith, but He also gives us practical lessons suitable to every condition and circumstance of our present existence. These lessons are contained, for the most part, in the holy gospels and in the epistles found in the New Testament. These holy writings are the fountains of spiritual knowledge which the Church opens to her children, and from which her doctors, her preachers, and her ascetical writers have ever drawn that

fund of doctrine which marks her as the teacher of men, the evangelizer of nations, and the guide of souls. This teaching of Christ enlightens the mind, lifting it up by instruction in heavenly and eternal truths ; it stimulates hope, filling men with confidence, and inspiring encouragement and constancy, and it feeds the flames of Divine charity, drawing the hearts of men to God, to religion, and to piety. Our Lord said of Himself : ' I am the light of the world : he that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life ' (St. John viii. 12).

Love, then, devout Christian, Christ's holy teaching, which reaches you in so many ways, and it will be your sure guide to eternal life. Regret that you have not always lived and acted conformably with it. Pray now that you may understand ever more clearly the lessons it conveys, and that you may have the grace to put them in practice. Finally, remembering how Mary treasured up in her pure mind the heavenly messages she received, beg of her to obtain for you the grace to do the same to your present and everlasting profit.

January 15.

CHRIST OUR CONSOLER.

I. Reflect upon the comfort we should derive from our Lord's invitation to go to Him with all our cares. He says: 'Come to Me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you' (St. Matt. xi. 28). Since He is all in all to us, He would not have us seek consolation away from Him, but with these words inspiring confidence, He invites us to have recourse to Himself. All Christians should go to Him for help and for consolation under the trials of life. With Him is all power. 'All power,' He said, 'is given to Me in Heaven and in earth' (St. Matt. xxviii. 18). He can help us, but will He? We have only to study His deeds of loving compassion to know that He will. His gracious invitation,' Come to Me,' affords us a most consoling assurance of His willingness to relieve and refresh our souls. In everything that our Lord has planned for man's help and consolation we see displayed the true tenderness of His Sacred Heart. He deigned Himself to share with men the labours, cares, and sorrows of life, and the thought of this tends to comfort them under the trials of their present existence.

Be not disheartened, then, devout Christian, under the burdens of life, but be resolved to carry your cares to the feet of Jesus, Who lovingly desires to be your Consoler. He says to you, as to the disciples: 'Your sorrow shall be turned into joy' (St. John xvi. 20). Admire His thoughtfulness for His followers, and the true character of His compassion. Rejoice in having One to console you Who will refresh you with heavenly blessings, and express with thankfulness your confidence in Him.

II. Reflect that man's greatest burden is his sinfulness. How happy life would be if it could be spent without any

sins being committed during it! Man also experiences other burdens that he feels keenly. There are his spiritual and bodily infirmities, his proclivity to evil, his sluggishness to do good, faults of temperament, opposition from others, labours and anxieties, and the cares and sorrows of life. All these make him feel the need of a Consoler. Christians do not turn to Jesus in vain. St. Paul tells us that He is 'Lord over all, rich unto all that call upon Him' (Rom. x. 12). He gives us the lessons of His own life of labours and sufferings; He makes over to us the value of His own infinite merits; He pardons and takes away our sins in the Holy Sacrament of Penance; He offers Himself daily by the hands of His priests as the Immaculate Lamb upon our Altars to obtain for us every possible grace; He comes into our hearts in Holy Communion; He bids us pray in His Name that all things we ask for may be granted to us; and He instructs us by His doctrine, which affords us enlightenment, comfort, and hope. How real and how practical are His consolations!

Be comforted, devout Christian, by the thought of all these Divine helps and blessings so plentifully provided by your loving Saviour for your relief and consolation. Cast yourself in spirit at His sacred feet to thank Him for His tender care of you. Beseech Him ever to support you, and to draw your heart with the strong bonds of charity and confidence to Himself, that you may not foolishly and vainly seek your consolation away from Him.

III. Reflect that, though the helps, blessings, and consolations provided by our Lord are so abundant and so adequate, men are yet at fault in not availing themselves of them, or they do not seek them at the proper time, or in the proper manner. Those who do not avail themselves of Christ's consolations are such as do not pray in their needs, or assist at the Holy Mass, or approach the Holy Sacraments, or reflect upon the lessons of our Lord's life and teaching; but who murmur, and repine, and seek their comfort in creatures or in dissipation. Those who do not seek Christ's help and consolation at the proper time, are such as turn to Him only as a last resource. Perhaps,

though late, they may even then derive some comfort from doing so, but will it be as much as if they had turned to Him at first? Those, finally, who do not seek Christ's consolations in a proper manner are such as do not do so in a becoming spirit of devotedness to His will, or with that love of Him and that spirit of generosity which tend to move His Sacred Heart; but who display petulancy and even avidity for their own comfort and relief, rather than patience and resignation.

Devout Christian, let Christ's will be ever sacred to you, as well in time of affliction as in time of joy. Recognize the wisdom and love of all His appointments. Do not imitate the faulty conduct we have been considering, but regard Christ as your true Consoler, and resolve to have dutiful recourse to Him in all your trials and anxieties. Beg of Mary, who best knows the tenderness of the Sacred Heart, to intercede for you with her Son to obtain for you such consolations as may be suited to your spiritual welfare, for this should be your chief consideration.

January 16.

CHRIST OUR ALL.

I. REFLECT that since God decrees that all our spiritual strength must come to us from Christ, men are weak and are overcome because they have not recourse to Him. We also shall fall away and become the prey of our spiritual enemies if we depart from Christ, if we do not seek the aid of His grace, and if we do not co-operate with the graces He bestows. Christ is our All. St. Paul says: 'I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me' (Phil. iv. 13); and our Lord has said: 'Without Me you can do nothing' (St. John xv. 5). Happily our Lord wishes ever to help us and to display His bounty towards us. This should inspire us with confidence and with comfort. If only we are united to Him by grace and seek to walk in His grace, then through Him we shall be strong, in Him we shall be made rich, through Him we shall enjoy peace, and aided by Him we shall overcome our spiritual enemies, and finally reach the kingdom of God.

Will you not, then, devout Christian, cultivate the friendship of Jesus, and turn to Him in all your needs? Ah, let not the attractions of the world, or any vain allurements, draw you away from your only and your sovereign Good, or cause you to forget what He is to you, and what are His claims upon your devoted service. Acknowledge now your weakness and your helplessness, and beseech Him to be ever your Protector and the source of your strength.

II. Christians should take comfort from the condition of their dependence on Christ in all that concerns their spiritual life and well-being, and from the character of their relations with Him, because of His tender compassion and generous love. He wishes to outpour upon us the graces,

mercies, helps, and blessings which He has purchased for us by His sacred Passion and Death. His infinite merits are as an everflowing fountain discharging freely its waters to fertilize the lands around it. In countless ways He applies to our needy souls these saving merits. And even as the father stretches out his arms to his tiny, helpless child to raise him up to his embrace, so does our Lord stretch forth His arms to us, and invite us to the embraces of His Sacred Heart, that He may communicate to us from that Divine source of all graces and benedictions, the treasures of His bounty and the fervour of His charity. The Divine arms He thus stretches out to us are those of His strength, support, protection, goodness, compassion, mercy, and love. Our Lord bids us to be of good heart and not to fear. There are no ills of humanity to which He cannot apply a remedy, there are no wants that He cannot supply, and there are no sorrows that He cannot assuage. The fountains of His bounty and of His mercy are never exhausted, and His Sacred Heart ever beats with love for men.

Be confident, then, devout Christian, that no grace will be wanting to you in your difficulties and in your needs, and that you will ever experience God's help and protection in the battle of life, if only you have recourse to your loving Saviour by prayer, and by the Holy Mass and the Holy Sacraments. Be confident, too, that from Him will come to your soul many joys and consolations. Praise ever the bounty of God displayed in all the ways of His providence, and humbly acknowledge your dependence upon Him.

III. Reflect that, though Christ is everything to the Christian, there are yet many Christians who would seem to wish to live without Him. His arms are indeed stretched out to them, but, alas ! they turn away and disregard His invitations ; they do not even understand all that Christ is to them. It is their very Creator that yearns for them, and they turn to creatures ; it is God Who would raise them up to union with Himself by grace and by holiness of life, and they adhere to what is carnal, worldly, and material. It is the Heavenly King Who invites them to the wedding feast, but they are kept back by inordinate affections, by

worldly cares, and by spiritual indifference. It will be sad if they allow the day of their visitation to pass without heeding it. To all Christians Christ should be their all, their Good Shepherd, their friend, their only good, their treasure, and the object of their desires. Then will they regard Him ever with love, and seek ever to please Him. While fulfilling all the duties of their state of life, and showing due consideration for their neighbour, and while giving sufficient attention to their worldly affairs, and taking their place in society, they will ever be guided by religious motives, and they will not allow anything to lead them to transgress God's law, or to neglect the essential duties of religion.

Turn ever, devout Christian, with loyalty and devotion to Christ day by day, looking to Him for the many graces you need, and let it ever be your pleasure to seek in all things to do His will and to please Him. Regret now your past negligence, and your many sins, and pray for grace to make amends by dutifulness to the demands of religion in the future. Look up to Mary with great confidence, and seek through her intercession the grace ever to be true to the love of her Divine Son.

January 17.

THE MOST HOLY NAME OF JESUS.

I. The Holy Name of Jesus is the most cherished of all names. St. Paul says : ' God also hath exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above all names : That in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth ' (Phil. ii. 9, 10). St. Bernard refers to this adorable Name the words of the Canticle of Canticles : ' Thy Name is as oil poured out ' (i. 2). Until the Name of Jesus was preached, there existed, for the most part, among the nations ignorance of the most vital truths, such as the existence of God, the conditions of salvation, man's eternal destiny, and the means of attaining it. Men sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death. But with the preaching to the nations of the Name of Jesus, light shone forth to dispel the darkness. What the Holy Name was to the nations it is to the individual Christian who calls upon it with faith and piety—namely, a revelation of Divine love and mercy. From this Name, as from oil, comes light, and just as oil affords nourishment, so from the Name of Jesus does the soul derive spiritual food. For through this all-powerful Name, grace comes to the soul to revive its weakened forces, and to sustain it in its struggles and labours. It is effective in ennobling our sentiments, in purifying our affections, and in stimulating our ardour. Moreover, even as oil has a soothing effect, so is the Holy Name powerful in sorrow to soothe our mind and to solace the heart. And especially in the sorrow of repentance does it afford comfort, for it tells us that Jesus came to save us from our sins. Blessed then for evermore be the most Holy Name of Jesus !

Devout Christian, join with the Angels and Saints in Heaven, and with all the just on earth, in praising the

Name of your Saviour. Thank Him for all the comfort His most blessed Name has brought to you in this land of your exile, in your temptations, sorrows, and struggles. Let it be ever on your lips as a watchword and protection.

II. The pious use of the Name of Jesus is most beneficial. It calls Jesus to our side with all the array of His Divine power, and with all the tenderness of His compassion and mercy. He is our Leader, and we belong to Him. When we piously call upon His Holy Name, Satan and his crew are terrified, and they have to acknowledge their powerlessness. It stimulates us to bravery, and it inspires us with confidence. In the miserable temptations which we experience, and which often appeal very powerfully to our imagination and senses, we should invoke that most powerful of all names, the Name of Him, on Whose standard are inscrolled the names of all the virtues, and Who Himself is the brightest Model of them all. He Who triumphed so signally over Satan and the world will give us grace to despise the unlawful pleasures and gains by which our spiritual enemies would draw away our souls from God. When we call with piety and confidence upon the Holy Name, we, as it were, put on the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, and the breastplate of justice, of which St. Paul speaks (Eph. vi.). And the Evil Spirits will cry out, as they did of old : ' What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Son of God ? art Thou come hither to torment us before the time ?' (St. Matt. viii. 29). Victory will therefore be with us. Alas ! men, far from wishing to spurn evil temptations, even expose themselves wilfully to them ! And many use the adorable Name only in blasphemy and oaths ! Such as these do not deserve to be heard and to be protected when, upon the occurrence of serious danger to soul, body, or property, they do in alarm invoke that Holy Name.

Devout Christian, cultivate, like Saints Bernard, Bernardine, Francis, and Teresa, a special love of the most Holy Name of Jesus. This devotion will be rewarded with many spiritual blessings, and with a special providence.

III. A name acquires its degree of dignity, according to

the distinguished character of him who bears it. What, then, should be said of the dignity of the Name of Jesus ? As St. Paul says, it has been given by the Heavenly Father, and it is ' a Name which is above all names.' See, then, its claim to our reverence and love. The Angel said to Joseph : ' Thou shalt call His Name Jesus ' (St. Matt. i. 21). It is the Name of our beloved Jesus, our Good Shepherd, our Divine Friend, Who laid down His life to save us. Our Lord said : ' Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends ' (St. John xv. 13). This is what Jesus did for us. How dear, then, to us should His Name ever be ! Holy Church teaches us to love it by the reverence for it which her liturgy inculcates. She has appointed in its honour a special annual festival. The Saints give us a glorious example of love of it. Christian parents in every age have sought to instil into the mind of their children a tender affection for it. How far, then, they depart from the Christian tradition who show disrespect to the most Holy Name of Jesus ! a Name which should be upon our lips in early childhood, and again when we are departing this life. Let us, then, often say : ' Blessed be the Name of Jesus.' Let us make reparation for the blasphemous use made of this Holy Name. Let us invoke it in our needs. Our pious use of it will prove to us a source of grace and consolation. May it be our happy lot to sing its praises in the ranks of the Blessed in the heavenly kingdom !

Devout Christian, persevere in your devotion to this most Holy Name. It will be your shield of protection, and it will win for you in your difficulties, and especially at the hour of death, the loving aid of your Divine Master and Friend. Ask Mary, to whom the Name of Jesus is specially dear, to obtain for you the grace of this devotion, and zeal to make amends for the blasphemies of sinners.

January 18.

CHRIST EVER WITH US.

I. Our Divine Saviour by the operations of His grace continues to the end of all time His merciful work among those whom in His love He redeemed. By the means of His holy Word He ever communicates with them, instructing them by His admirable teaching, and thus opening His mind and His heart to them; and through Him, in other ways also, do men's relations with God seem more intimate than they were under the Old Dispensation. Thus, we see how He puts Himself in our hands in the Holy Mass that we may come before the face of God with a sacrifice worthy of Him; and how through the Christian priesthood He ministers to all the needs of our souls, for the priests of the New Law are 'the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God' (1 Cor. iv. 1). This ministry is not figurative or symbolical, but real, for our Lord said to His Apostles and to the pastors of His Church: 'As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you' (St. John xx. 21); 'He that heareth you, heareth Me' (St. Luke x. 16). And St. Peter says of the power of the priesthood, 'If any man minister, let him do it as of the power which God administereth' (1 St. Pet. iv. 11). The operations of Christ, Who is ever with His Church, are continued in the world chiefly through His holy priesthood.

Open, then, your mind, devout Christian, to the consoling doctrine of Christ's continual work for your sanctification and spiritual good. Admire His loving providence for your everlasting welfare. Let not worldly thoughts or pursuits divert your attention from the work of your salvation, or turn your affections from God and your loving Saviour, or cause you to disregard the relations which He has deigned to establish with you.

II. Reflect that Christ has not left us to ourselves alone and unprovided for. Mystery shrouds our spiritual life and our future well-being; but, even so, through Christ those things that are not seen, and which may even seem uncertain or unreal, in what concerns our soul and the supernatural, are all fully provided for. The hand and the power of Christ operate through the Holy Sacraments, and in the Holy Eucharist He is verily present with us. These Sacraments impart grace to our souls to cleanse them, to heal them, to strengthen them, to console and refresh them, and to bring them to union with God by grace and by the bonds of charity. These operations, although effected by human ministry and visible signs, are all of them Divine. Christ, through His Divine power and infinite merits, accomplishes them. It must therefore be said that Christ is ever with us as the source of the Christian's supernatural life, and that through His grace He moves and aids us to will and to perform every act pleasing to God and worthy of supernatural reward.

Seek ever, devout Christian, the means of grace, that you may lead, not a vain or worldly life, but one in union with Christ, and that thus you may be strengthened by Him, and taste the blessings of His peace. Admire the continual love and goodness which He displays in the workings of Divine grace in the souls of His followers, and pray that you may never turn away from your loving Saviour by mortal sin, but may be ever desirous of pleasing Him in every circumstance of life.

III. Reflect that through the operations of grace in so many ways in the souls of men, Divine Love manifests itself in all its condescension, bountifulness, intensity, comprehensiveness, and constancy. It despises no one, and forgets nothing. For all this we have to thank the Sacred Heart. The message of love, its yearnings and its tokens, are for all: for sinners that they may be converted and saved, and for the just that they be strengthened and maintained in the path of their sanctification. Our Lord stretches forth the arms of His infinite charity to embrace all mankind, to bring all within the fold of His loving care, to unite all in

one common bond, to make of all only one body, of which He is the head, so that He may live in us, and we in Him. St. Paul therefore says : ' You are the body of Christ, and members of member ' (1 Cor. xii. 27). Our Lord would thus make us participate in His merits, in His sacrifice, in His strength, and in His crown. He would become all to us, that we may be entirely drawn to Him, and seek ever to correspond with His love.

See, then, devout Christian, the glorious things which Christ holds out to you, and the ways of love to which He invites you. He would be ever your support and the source of your comfort throughout the whole course of your present existence. Be not insensible to the demands of His love, and let nothing cause you so much sorrow as to offend Him. Pray to Mary to beg through her intercession grace ever to correspond with the loving designs of her Son for your salvation and happiness.

January 19.

KNOWING GOD.

I. Reflect that God reveals Himself to us in different ways in order that we may know Him, love Him, and serve Him. He reveals Himself by creation, by His providence, and by His word. St. Paul says: 'The invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made: His eternal power also and divinity' (Rom. i. 20). God is known, then, through the things we see, through the works of His hands. When Christians behold the wonders of creation as seen only in this world, and marvel at the beauty, variety, and order displayed therein, let them raise their minds to the great Creator, and praise Him for His power, wisdom, and goodness. How far exalted above the works of His hands is the Divine Creator Himself Who has brought them forth from nothingness! These works are a revelation to all men of God's infinite perfections. Let all then praise God, saying with David: 'O Lord our Lord, how admirable is Thy Name in the whole earth! For Thy magnificence is elevated above the heavens. . . . The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands' (Pss. viii. and xviii.).

Devout Christian, let the things of creation that are seen fill you with an earnest desire of seeing and knowing God, Whose perfections are displayed in them. Admire the wonders of those perfections which they reveal to you now in a limited way, and desire ever to praise them. Let not any of the works of God's hands draw your affections away from Him, but let them ever raise your mind and heart in dutiful worship to Him.

II. Reflect that we come to know God also by the things we experience, by His dealings with us, by the works

of His providence. It is evident to all men that Someone provides in many ways for them, that all things do not come to them solely through their own effort, and that all things do not happen to them as a result of their own plans and arrangements. It is evident to all men that no human power controls natural agencies, or bestows the blessings yielded by Nature, or regulates the giving, or maintaining, or finishing of life in any order or class of created beings that enjoy life. Someone provides for us, Someone rules over us by dispensations over which we have no control, Someone marks the term of our existence. This Someone is God, and He makes Himself known to us by the goodness of His providence. He is our Protector and our Support. Can Christians forget Him Whose hand provides so bountifully for them ? whose arm defends them from so many dangers ? whose eye ever watches over them so lovingly ? Does not God reveal Himself to them in the blessings of His Providence ? in so many dispensations having for object their welfare ?

Recognize, devout Christian, around you and in you, workings which tell you of the goodness and love of your Heavenly Father ; they help you in a very effectual way to know God. Let this knowledge lead you to think of God, to bless Him, to trust in Him, to seek Him, and to love and serve Him. David says : ' Give glory to the Lord, for He is good ' (Ps. cv. 1). Let it be your delight to praise Him, and to seek at all times to please Him.

III. Reflect that God also reveals Himself by His Word. This is a most marvellous revelation, which Christians may study during a whole lifetime without exhausting all the lessons it conveys. What a revelation of God is contained in the pages of Holy Writ, and in the teaching of the Church ! Through this teaching Christians learn the mysteries of the Faith, God's revelation of Himself and of His works, and of His dealings with men, and through it they are admitted to a vision of the future. It opens to their vision the true way of salvation, and the two issues of life, the eternity of happiness as a reward, and the eternity of misery as a punishment. It tells them of God's love and

mercy, filling them with hope, confidence, and consolation. It reveals to them the mystery of God made man, and the immeasurable scope of the work of redemption. God opens the meaning of His Word to little ones—that is, to the humble and to the holy—and they become enamoured of His teaching and advance in wisdom, knowledge, and virtue. In this way do Christians through the Word come to know God and to be drawn towards Him.

Desire for yourself, devout Christian, this heavenly knowledge. By desires, by humility, by listening to the Word, prepare your heart for it. It will enlighten your mind, and be a guide to your steps. Pray to Mary, who ever loved the Word of God, to obtain for you a fuller measure of heavenly light that you may come to know God better and to love Him more ardently.

January 20.

WHY WE SHOULD LOVE GOD.

I. Countless reasons should compel men to love God, but some of them strike the mind at once when the question is asked why we should love God. St. John says that we should love Him ' because He hath first loved us, and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins ' (1 St. John iv. 10). If God were not essentially charity (1 St. John iv. 16), how could we understand His love of men ? A flood of light falls upon His love of us when we contemplate the mysteries of the Divine Incarnation and Redemption, and the mystery, too, of the Holy Eucharist. He tells us by His prophet the Divine designs manifested in these mysteries : ' I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love ' (Osee xi. 4). God has assumed the nature of man, and has dwelt amongst us. Men and women have embraced His Sacred Feet, and a disciple has rested his head near the Sacred Heart ; human eyes have beheld His Sacred Face, and human ears have heard His sweet voice. This was the enchanting vision of God made man, and made man for love of us. Let Christians, as taught by Holy Church, keep these mysteries of Divine love ever fresh in their memory. to feed the holy flames of their charity, and to lead them to deeds of piety.

Devout Christian, let it be your constant desire to love God more and more. The love of God makes the most solid foundation of religion and of virtue. Often make acts of love, and pray for an increase of this most necessary virtue. Love God because He is God, and because of His love of you.

II. Christians should, moreover, love God because of what He is in Himself—because He is infinitely perfect and infinitely worthy of love. The Divine condescensions draw

men's hearts to love, but men should be captivated also by the thought of God's infinite Beauty, Holiness, Compassion, Bounty, Love, Mercy, and Wisdom. These perfections enrapture the highest Intelligences in the beauteous heavens, and they have created and adorned with surpassing gifts the countless bright Angels who fill those realms of bliss with unceasing hymns of grateful and worshipful praise. The stamp of these perfections is also on the visible world we live in, and upon every one of God's works. David exclaims: 'Thou hast multiplied Thy wonderful works, O Lord my God: and in Thy thoughts there is no one like to Thee' (Ps. xxxix. 6). Order and magnificence in creation, and love and goodness in His dispensations, call for everlasting praise from all God's intelligent creatures, and should win their unceasing admiration, love, and gratitude. Christians have, then, in God's infinite perfections displayed in every order of creation a powerful motive for loving God. Do not all experience His goodness? All may therefore exclaim with the prophet: 'Thou hast dealt with us, O Lord our God, according to all Thy goodness, and according to all that great mercy of Thine' (Bar. ii. 27).

Devout Christian, the more you consider what God is Himself, and the more you admire all the display of His perfections, the more should your heart be inflamed with pure and holy feelings of love for Him Whom you have been created to love, and Who alone is worthy of all your love.

III. Christians owe an immense debt of everlasting gratitude to God for all His blessings, whether in the spiritual or in the temporal order, and this debt they can pay only by their love. This is the return that God demands, and will they refuse it? All the gifts they may offer Him without the priceless gift of their heart will not satisfy Him. God has blessed men by His works in creating them and in redeeming them, and by all the loving dispensations of His tender, wise, and merciful providence. How little it is to offer in return all the love of their hearts! Let them offer and consecrate this love to Him as a token of their gratitude. If they love others, let it not be with

any diminution of their love of God, and let it be for God's sake. Faith may tell men of God, and hope may lead them to trust in Him, but only charity can unlock the treasury of God's bounties now, and the kingdom of His glory hereafter. Both gratitude and self-interest should therefore prompt men to love God.

Devout Christian, pray ever for the grace to love God more and more. The longer you live the more earnestly should you love Him, because your indebtedness to His bounty and to His mercy is ever increasing. Beseech Mary, your heavenly Mother, to obtain for you an ever-increasing love of God, that your soul may experience the joy that will follow from it, and that you may be drawn closer and more practically into union with God in the Sacred Heart.

January 21.

PROOFS OF GOD'S LOVE OF US.

I. It should ever comfort us to be able to look up to the Sovereign and Eternal God, and to say: God loves us. Only one class of creatures is excluded from God's love—namely, the reprobate in Hell. God does not love them; therefore are they in darkness and misery, and their lot is one of everlasting unutterable woe. God gave being to Angels and to men that He might lavish upon them His love; and even when man fell from grace, God loved him still. We may say that creation supplied the objects of God's love. After the fall of man, Divine love manifested itself in the merciful mystery of man's redemption. But even death itself does not mark the term of love, for after it comes love's crowning work in the everlasting reward. O man of faith, do you contemplate all this love with stolid indifference? Do you not yearn for God's love, and are you not drawn to God by love? What, however, can we do of ourselves? God meets our wants; He supplies for our impotence, and infuses into our hearts the grace which enables us to love Him, and to love Him as we ought. St. Paul tells us that 'the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost Who is given to us' (Rom. v. 5).

Devout Christian, you recognize the mystery of God's love, and you are not happy except you feel you are trying to love God. Be ever mindful of God's manifold claims upon your love, and beware of being led astray by any inordinate affection for creatures. They will pass away, but God is from eternity unto eternity. Fix your love in Him.

II. God's incomprehensible love has manifested itself in a way that appeals most directly to our minds and hearts—namely, through the most Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Christ in human form brings the Divinity into

union with our humanity, and by this mystery lifts up and draws our hearts to Himself. He seems to say to us what God said of old to Israel : ' I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity ' (Jer. xxxi. 3). God has taken a human heart, and this most Sacred Heart beats with love for men. Upon this Heart we may lean in our sorrow and distress, and from it, as from a fountain, we may draw the refreshing and invigorating waters of grace. We hear our Lord's loving invitation : ' Come to Me all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refesh you ' (St. Matt. xi. 28). It is a strong, true, faithful, and wise Heart, and one that knows how to compassionate us in our miseries, and under the burden of our weaknesses. David says : ' For the Lord will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His own inheritance ' (Ps. xciii. 14). By assuming our humanity, Christ has made us His own brethren (St. John xx. 17), and He loves us as such. O consoling thought !

Devout Christian, have you no return to make for the immense and constant love of Christ, your Saviour ? Detest your past ingratitude, and be resolved to make it your chief joy for the future to love our Lord with a true and constant love. Then will you strive to avoid every kind of sin, and you will carefully restrain yourself from every inordinate affection, and from attachment to the vanities of the world.

III. If we would learn how the most Sacred Heart of Jesus loves us, we must study the lessons of our Lord's life, works, and mission. He came into the world for our sake. If He lived for so many years in retirement and under obedience, it was for us, and because He loved us. If He submitted Himself to so many trials, contradictions, and persecutions, it was because He loved us. For our sake, too, He delivered Himself up to the most cruel of deaths ! This was because He loved us. Proofs of the love of the Sacred Heart still continue. We have them in the holy mission perpetuated in the Church, and in the sacramental system established for our sanctification and salvation. The Holy Eucharist, in which we have our

Lord's sacramental presence ever with us, may be termed the testament of the love of the Sacred Heart. We are not, then, surprised to hear our Lord say to Blessed Margaret Mary : ' Behold this Heart which has loved men so much.' Why will not men study with greater interest and earnestness the manifestations of Divine love ? Men would be moved to greater piety if they did so.

Devout Christian, let not the love of the Sacred Heart for men be to you as a sealed book. Open this book in your pious reflections, and your heart will be drawn with sweet attraction to the loving Heart of your Divine Saviour. Beseech Mary, ' Our Lady of the Sacred Heart,' to obtain for you the grace of this attraction, that you may not be drawn aside by the sinful or vain allurements which lead so many souls away from God. Often repeat acts of love of the Sacred Heart.

January 22.

ADVANTAGES OF LOVING GOD.

I. A SINCERE and steadfast love of God exercises a salutary power in the life of devout Christians. As a moving principle, it leads them to strive to do what is pleasing to God, and not to do what would displease Him. When other motives would be ineffectual, Divine charity succeeds; as in overcoming Nature when it is sluggish or rebellious; in moving men to fight the good fight in times of danger, opposition, or temptation; in sustaining them in the dark hour of sorrow, affliction, or desolation; and in making them contented under the labours and fatigues of a life of struggle. Because they love God, they are prepared to do all things, and to bear all things, for Him or for His sake. This is true practical charity. Our life and our love must have the same measure of existence, and then the happy influence of Divine charity will ever be felt by us. It is written: 'Many waters cannot quench charity . . . if a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing' (Cant. viii. 7).

Devout Christian, reflect often on the advantages of loving God, and examine if your love is sincere and steadfast. Love will make you dutiful and strong. Of the just man, loving God, it is written: 'The law of his God is in his heart, and his steps shall not be supplanted' (Ps. xxxvi. 31).

II. Divine charity is a necessity to our spiritual life. It imparts spiritual vigour, courage, and patience. It may be said of us, that it is only when we feel something of the power of Divine love that we begin to take a real interest in leading a good life. It is true that natural innocence of disposition, and the influence of good example, may help us for a while; but in the real battle of life we shall fail unless we be moved and sustained by a sincere love of God.

Divine charity is the only sure preventive against sin. It instils into our heart a hatred of sin because of its offence to God. Such is man's weakness, and such is the power of his evil proclivities, that it may confidently be asserted that he cannot be counted upon to refrain from sin by reason of its unseemliness, or of its disastrous consequences. No ; evil passion makes some men slaves, and they become spiritually hardened and heedless. What can and should keep men from sin is their love of God, Who is offended by it. Such love will lead them to say in the hour of evil temptation : ' How . . . can I do this wicked thing and sin against my God ?' (Gen. xxxix. 9). If once we put the clamours of our evil inclinations, or the love of creatures, before the claims of God upon our love and service, we shall fall miserably.

Devout Christian, if you cling to God with the desire to persevere in His love, you will be spiritually strong, for God Himself will sustain you. Moreover, you will abhor the ways of evil, and you will deem as the only real misfortune the commission of sin.

III. Consider some other advantages of loving God. We shall be loved by Him, and He will abide with us. Our Lord said : ' If any man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him ' (St. John xiv. 23). If we love God, we shall easily be moved to repentance, and God will readily display His mercy. It is written : ' Charity covereth all sins ' (Prov. x. 12). If we love God, we shall experience in a special way the Divine Bounty. God will move our heart to a sincere love of virtue, and He will enrich our souls with many spiritual gifts. This is taught where it is said of Wisdom : ' That I may enrich them that love Me, and may fill their treasures ' (Prov. viii. 21). If we love God, He will be our Protector. He will defend us against visible and invisible enemies. David says : ' The Lord keepeth all them that love Him ' (Ps. cxliv. 20). Finally, if we love God, He will receive us into His own heavenly kingdom, where we ' shall be inebriated with the plenty of His house, and shall drink of the torrent of His

pleasure.' There shall we taste and see how sweet is the Lord. Concerning the delights there everlastingly enjoyed it is not now granted us to form any adequate idea : ' Neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him ' (1 Cor. ii. 9).

Devout Christian, do not deprive yourself of any of these inestimable advantages of Divine charity. Ask Mary, the highest model of charity, to obtain for you the grace of a more perfect love. Seek this grace by prayer and by receiving the Holy Sacraments frequently.

January 23.

THE HOLY FAMILY.

I. When Catholics speak of the Holy Family, they usually refer to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph living at Nazareth, after the return from Jerusalem at the time when our Lord was twelve years old. They picture to themselves with sentiments of piety and admiration the life of that family until the death of St. Joseph, which is considered to have occurred shortly before our Lord began His missionary career. They devoutly contemplate the occupations and the sublime virtues of the three persons who constituted that thrice-holy family, and they draw from their contemplation lessons to reconcile themselves to a life of retirement, of labour, and of disregard, or of obedience, humility, patience, and charity. St. Luke records how, when Mary and Joseph left Jerusalem at the time already mentioned, Jesus 'went down with them, and came to Nazareth: and was subject to them. . . . And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men' (ii. 51, 52). If the lives of Saints in after ages afford matter for edification, and teach many lessons of virtues practised, trials patiently borne, and works sanctified by prayer and by holy intentions, what admirable lessons, and what edification, must not the lives of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph afford!

Devout Christian, contemplate with religious piety those more than earthly lives. How happy were Mary and Joseph to be associated so intimately with God made Man, and what lessons of holy wisdom they learnt from His Divine discourses and conduct!

II. The Holy Gospels (St. Mark vi. 3; St. Matt. xiii. 55) tell us that our Lord worked as a carpenter. We read: 'Many hearing Him were in admiration at His doctrine, saying: How came this Man by all these things? and what

wisdom is this that is given to Him, and such mighty works as are wrought by His hands ? Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary ?' Our Lord, then, followed the humble calling of His foster-father, St. Joseph. We also picture Him helping Mary in various ways ; for He ' was subject to them ' both. Although Master of Heaven and earth, Jesus placed Himself under the control and direction of Mary and Joseph. The admirable virtues that shone forth in His conduct were humility, obedience, exactness, and patience. Our Lord embraced a life of labour, and thence the condition and life of labour in His followers were raised in dignity, and were sanctified. Let His followers who earn their bread by labour call to mind that Jesus also did this, and let contentment under the burden sanctify their labour and render it meritorious. Our Lord Himself said : ' The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord ' (St. Matt. x. 24). What were the thoughts of Mary and Joseph while they beheld Jesus doing their behests, and engaged in the works of the house and of the carpenter's shop ? Were they not in admiration ? Were they not rendered content with their lot ? Did they not strive to imitate the virtues they saw practised ? In all these respects should our Lord's followers do likewise.

Devout Christian, be dutiful in labour, and in submission, according to the circumstances of your calling in life. Thank our Lord for the lessons taught in His hidden life at Nazareth. He invites your dutiful imitation.

III. The Holy Family is the model to be placed before every Christian family. In every family there should be religion, union, peace, charity, mutual consideration, and forbearance. The head of the family should inculcate the spirit which should produce these virtues. Religion should be the ruling principle, the most notable feature, and the predominant virtue. Then will the other virtues and features follow. Alas ! there are families in which religion is not inculcated, and in which it is not practised. There are houses in which there is no tender devotion to our Lord and to His Sacred Heart, no devotion to His most blessed Mother and to St. Joseph ; houses in which there are no

public prayers, no pious books, and no devotional pictures ; houses in which there is nothing to remind the members of the family of the blessings of Redemption, of the heavenly calling to God's kingdom, or of Christ and His Saints. Would that devotion to the Holy Family might find its way into such houses as these ! Then would the lives of the members of the family be less vain, worldly, and purposeless, and more surely directed to secure the blessedness of everlasting life in the world to come.

Devout Christian, study the admirable lessons taught by Jesus, Mary, and Joseph at Nazareth. Labour for peace and union, and let religious principles direct you in your relations with those among whom you live. Ask Mary to obtain for you the grace to sanctify your life by labour and prayer, and by a spirit of contentedness with your lot.

January 24.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD.

I. During the many decades of centuries which preceded the coming of Christ, the eyes of the just were, as it were, strained to get the first glimpse of Him. What did they know of Him? What did they think He would be like? The allusions to the Messias found in the prophecies were, for the most part, obscure, so we must conclude that the forecastings of the faithful under the Old Law must have been various and erroneous. Who could have pictured Jesus as we know Him? But do all Christians know Him? Alas! there are many who have no zest for the knowledge of their Saviour and Emmanuel, and many, too, whose knowledge of Him is imperfect and untrue, because not the fruit of Heaven-given faith, but of their own vain imaginings. How necessary true faith in our Lord is may be gathered from His own words: 'Now this is eternal life: That they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent' (St. John xvii. 3). Let us not be like those who study the character and actions of earthly kings and statesmen, but who do not seek to know who and what Jesus Christ was and is. Let us treasure the knowledge of our Saviour which we acquired in our early training, and let us love the holy teachings of the Gospel lessons, and seek by the earnest and constant practice of our religion to realize the blessings our Lord has prepared for His followers both in this life and in the next.

Devout Christian, set a true value on this holy knowledge and on this practical experience, without which there cannot be true sanctity.

II. There are various degrees or depths of this saving knowledge of our Lord. The first may be described as superficial; it comprises only a general realization of the

mystery of the Incarnation. The second degree leads to a practical issue ; it brings Christians to an understanding of Christ's place in their life, and of the necessity not only of believing in Him, but also of availing themselves of the means of obtaining grace and of the helps of religion. This is the kind of knowledge St. Paul demands where he says : ' As therefore you have received Jesus Christ, walk ye in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and confirmed in the faith ' (Col. ii. 6, 7). The third degree of this sanctifying knowledge comprises a closer study of the Divine mysteries, and of our Lord's inner life and virtues. It leads Christians to a more intimate union with Christ, bringing their mind into a clearer perception of Divine things, and their will into a more complete conformity with the Divine Will. It raises them so far above earthly satisfactions that they relish only what appertains to spiritual gain and what may draw their heart more firmly to Christ.

Devout Christian, while seeking the second degree of this saving knowledge, and striving to turn it to practical account in your life, direct also your steps forward that you may attain to the third degree, which will bring you many special blessings. Listen to St. Paul. He says : ' I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord. . . . Forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus ' (Phil. iii. 8, 13, 14).

III. The true knowledge of our Lord brings us light, and lifts up the soul. St. John tells us that Christ ' was the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world ' (i. 9). The fruit of this light is seen in the lives of the Saints ; we see it in their unworldliness, virtue, and constancy. The more firmly we are united to Christ by knowledge and charity, the more earnest we shall be in avoiding all faultiness, and in leading a perfect Christian life. The knowledge of our Lord shows us His Divinity shining, as it were, through His whole being, and in all His life and actions, creating a lustre and a meritoriousness which lift Him up in our admiration and love, and make us

see in Him our only hope. Poor fallen humanity! Through the first Adam you fell; through Jesus Christ, the second Adam, you rise. The first was only man, the second was God as well as man. St. Paul says: 'All things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Christ. . . . For God indeed was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing to them their sins' (2 Cor. v. 18, 19). The knowledge of our Lord shows Him to us as our only Saviour, in Whom we do not trust in vain; for He is God infinite in Love, Mercy, Power, and Goodness, and His infinite satisfactions and merits are more than enough to save us and all mankind.

Devout Christian, let your soul be lifted up with hope and comfort, while you cling to Christ. Apart from Him are only misery and despair. Ask Mary, the Mother of your Saviour, to obtain for you the light of a more perfect faith in her Divine Son, and a relish for a deeper knowledge of His virtues and perfections.

January 25.

THOUGHTS ON OUR LORD'S LOVE OF US.

I. Our Lord's whole life was in many ways a revelation of His love for men. This love is especially perceived in His living among men, in the lessons and consoling light of His teaching, in the compassion displayed in the miracles wrought by Him, and in His sacred sufferings and death. His love led Him to supply all humanity's needs. We see Him giving example, instructing and guiding, supplying remedies, instigating to virtue and holiness, consoling and befriending, providing means of grace and of mercy, and atoning for sin. Why all this? Because He loved us. What do we learn from the Feasts of the Christian Year? They all remind us of the wonders of Christ's love. Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, Corpus Christi, the Feast of the Sacred Heart—all should fill our hearts with devotion to our Lord, because they tell us how much He loves us. As years and ages roll on, these Feasts ever recur, bringing to men tokens and messages of our Lord's love. There is also a living memorial, with its daily and most fruitful tokens, in the Holy Mass and in the Blessed Sacrament. From these proceed countless graces—the bounties of our Lord's love. Alas, that men will not be moved by so much love! Many imitate the Israelites who, after all God's special providence, yet disregarded Him, and broke His law: 'They forgot His benefits, and His wonders that He had shown them' (Ps. lxxvii. 11).

Devout Christian, let it be the aim of your life to respond to so much love, by a grateful remembrance of it. Let your love of our Lord keep you from relapse into faulty ways, and preserve you in fidelity in the ways of duty and piety.

II. The study of the ways of our Lord's love impresses us with the idea of its magnitude and prevailingness. Everything had to be sacrified to it. It made our Lord brave the envy, enmity, and persecution of the ruling classes. He taught and performed His works of mercy and goodness, in spite of opposition and derision. He wearied Himself out in journeyings and labours. He refused nothing, and bore everything, in the mission and works to which His love impelled Him. Therefore did He embrace, and submit to, calumny, suffering, ignominy, and death. The beatings of His Sacred Heart, His compassionate glances, the tears that fell from His eyes, and the countless wounds of the Passion, were all as voices of His prevailing, outgushing love. He tells us of this love, where He says: 'As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you' (St. John xv. 9). St. Paul tells us that we must not allow anything to come between us and our Lord, to deprive us of His love—not tribulation, nor even death; and he asks: 'Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ? . . . But in all these things we overcome because of Him that hath loved us' (Rom. viii. 35, 37). Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, loves us; will we not love Him? Alas, that men prefer base satisfactions to the delights to be found in loving God!

Devout Christian, often recall our Lord's claims upon your love, that you may be able to say with St. Paul: 'I live in the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and delivered Himself for me' (Gal. ii. 20). Be astonished at our Lord's 'exceeding charity wherewith He loved us' (Eph. ii. 4). Pray that your love for Him in return may prove true at all times, especially under temptation and in suffering.

III. Our Lord loves us because His Heavenly Father loves us. It was Love that decreed the exceeding display of Goodness witnessed in the Divine Incarnation (St. John iii. 16), through which mystery men were to be brought to life everlasting. Our Lord loves us because He has assumed our nature, and bound Himself to us by all the

ties of a common nature, that there may be a corresponding love on our part. We read in the prophet Osee: 'I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love! (xi. 4). Everlasting life is to be everlasting love. O foolish men, why will you love the creature, and not the Divine Creator? Why will you allow wicked Satan and base passions to draw away your affections and your allegiance from the Sovereign and Eternal Good? Oh, lament your perversity and folly, and turn to God with renewed good purposes, to acknowledge His sovereign claims to your homage of love. Delay not to join the ranks of Christ's faithful lovers, who detest the ways of evil, and seek to please the Most High. David says: 'For who in the clouds can be compared to the Lord: or who among the sons of God shall be like to God? God Who is glorified in the assembly of the Saints' (Ps. lxxxviii. 7, 8). Turn, then, to Him Who alone is worthy of your love; and love others discreetly and according to God's will.

Devout Christian, study with admiration and gratitude the ways of Divine Charity, especially as revealed in our Lord's works and life. Ask your heavenly Mother Mary to obtain for you the grace to love her Divine Son with true and constant affection. Be ever among those who are zealous for His honour, and who seek to do His good pleasure.

January 26.

OUR LOVE OF CHRIST.

I. One of the ends our Lord had in the Incarnation was to bring men into everlasting friendship with God: it was part of His mission. St. Paul says: 'It hath well pleased the Father . . . through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself'; and the Apostle, addressing the Colossians, goes on to say: 'And you, whereas you were some time alienated and enemies in mind, in evil works: yet now He hath reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unspotted, and blameless before Him' (Col. i. 19-22). Our Lord's work of reconciliation goes on: even when He finds men sinners, as was the case with the Colossians, He strives to make them His friends. For this end has He confided to His Apostles and their successors power and authority, as St. Paul shows, where, speaking of God, he says: 'Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Christ: and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation' (2 Cor. v. 18). What friendship could be more honourable or more profitable than this Divine friendship? We must, then, prize it, and cultivate it, and prove ourselves worthy of it. Our Lord says: 'You are My friends, if you do the things that I command you' (St. John xv. 14). Friendship invites and demands love. We must for ever love our Divine Saviour. Is it possible that He, in His loving condescension, would make Himself our Friend, and that we should disregard His advances, and the immense cost by which He has effected our reconciliation with God?

Devout Christian, seek to make ever more secure the bond of charity which unites you to your Saviour. Let not worldliness or spiritual indifference make you remiss in satisfying His claims upon your love.

II. The Divine condescensions are such that our Lord has adopted us as His brethren, and made us the adopted sons of God. St. John says : ' As many as received Him, to them He gave power to be made the sons of God ' (i. 12) ; and St. Paul says : ' And if sons, heirs also : heirs, indeed, of God, and joint heirs with Christ ' (Rom. viii. 17). The bond of love following from this close relationship is more stringent even than that existing between friends. This relationship has its rights and amenities. Perhaps this is why the Saints have addressed our Lord in terms expressive of familiar love joined to the greatest reverence. St. Paul teaches us that we are even members of Christ's body, and this should convince us of the close union of charity with our Lord which grace effects—a union which imposes upon us the duty of sincere and constant love. The Apostle says : ' You are the body of Christ, and members of member ' (1 Cor. xii. 27) ; and elsewhere he says that ' doing the truth in charity,' we should ' grow up in Him Who is the head, even Christ ' (Eph. iv. 15). How few men there are who try to understand and realize what should be their relations of charity and union with Christ ! What is there that our Lord will not do for them ? He Who said : ' Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends ' (St. John xv. 13), ' has loved us and delivered Himself for us ' (Eph. v. 2), and continues to outpour upon us the fountains of His grace and heavenly benedictions. But He is not loved in return in any adequate manner. Few are the souls that seek to advance in His love.

Devout Christian, regret that as yet you love your Divine Saviour so little and so inconstantly. Admit His incomparable and paramount claims to your love, and pray for the grace of detachment from whatever may keep you back from loving Christ as you ought to love Him.

III. Christ should be loved by us by reason of Who He is, and what He is to us, and by reason also of the necessity to us of loving Him. If we do not love Him, we shall not reign with Him eternally. St. Paul says : ' If any man

love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema' (1 Cor. xvi. 22). Our Lord will not make over to us now the value of His satisfaction for sin for the remission of our sins, if there be not at least the beginning of charity in our soul; moreover, that any of our works may be meritorious of a heavenly reward, they must be performed by us in the state of grace, which means that we must be united to Christ by charity. Our Lord says: 'As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me.' How necessary, then, it is that we should love our Lord! How much depends upon it! When men do not love our Lord, what are the things they love? They love gaiety, earthly vanities, passing riches and pleasures, worldly distinctions, and even base satisfactions. When the brief time in which these things may be enjoyed shall have passed away, what shall be the eternal lot of those who have loved them? When will men be dutiful to God, and wise in directing their affections?

Devout Christian, our Lord says to you: 'Abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love' (St. John xv. 9, 10). Let no temporal allurements draw you from Christ's everlasting love. Close your heart to seductive pleasures and inordinate affections, which lead souls from the ways of grace. Ask Mary, your heavenly Protectress, to obtain for you wisdom in bestowing your affections, and the grace of constancy in loving what is good.

January 27.

OUR LORD'S WORK.

I. Our Lord's coming into the world was an event of more illustrious, stupendous, and important character than any other recorded in the world's history. The benefits of His coming will live on till the end of all time, and even to all eternity. Our Lord came as our Saviour, and opened to men the way of everlasting salvation. The Angel Gabriel said to Joseph: 'Thou shalt call His Name Jesus. For He shall save His people from their sins' (St. Matt. i. 21). And St. John 'heard a loud voice in Heaven, saying: Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: because the Accuser of our brethren is cast forth' (Apoc. xii. 10). All true Christians rejoice, and continue to rejoice, because redemption and mediation have been gloriously effected, bringing to men grace, peace, and salvation. Every generation of men, participating in the fruits of redemption, commemorates with gratitude our Lord's work. Yet, alas, there are many men whose lives are blighted by worldliness and sin, who shall not reap the benefits of this work. Would that, entering into themselves, these foolish men might yet repent, and seek the true path of peace and salvation!

Devout Christian, ever treasure up the memory of your Saviour's work, and ever desire and seek its fruits; that you may be made strong and rich, sustained by Christ's heavenly grace (1 Cor. i. 4-9). Do not permit any earthly satisfactions to wean your heart from God's love and service.

II. Our Lord's work was not effected without much suffering. How wonderful it must ever appear to us that God decreed for His only beloved Son so great a sacrifice!

St. Paul says : ' We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son ' (Rom. v. 10). Our Lord embraced generously all that was comprised in the Divine decrees : His sacred wounds were to heal all our infirmities, and His cruel death on the Cross was to purchase for us everlasting life. We therefore recall with sentiments of gratitude and consolation the prophecy : ' He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins : the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed ' (Is. liii. 5). It cannot correctly be said that Christ died in our place ; for our death would not have satisfied the claims of Divine Justice. But with grateful hearts we proclaim that He died for us, and by His death fully satisfied for our sins. What we could not accomplish He has effected ; and now, by His death, we have been reconciled to God. Alas, that men turn to no account the sufferings and death of their Saviour ! Alas, that they neglect the means of salvation, and fail to fulfil the necessary conditions ! The Holy Scriptures say to such as these : ' Except you will be converted, He will brandish His sword : He hath bent His bow, and made it ready ' (Ps. vii. 13). Let them speedily turn to God, and serve Him in the happy company of the just.

Devout Christian, take care not to reopen the wounds of your soul by relapse : but, devoutly honouring your Saviour's Passion, avoid every danger of sin, and cling to the ways of holy living.

III. Our Lord has opened to us the way of salvation, and now He awaits us in Heaven to number us among His elect. Shall we pursue any other way ? Shall it not concern us to make sure our calling and election ? There are, alas, men who seem to prize more the passing satisfactions of earth than the everlasting glory and bliss of Heaven. We must correspond with our Lord's loving designs ; we must adhere faithfully to the ways of a good Christian life ; we must avail ourselves of the blessings and aids provided in the Church for our salvation ; and we must use the means that will insure our perseverance in grace. Then will our Lord's work bear fruit in our

souls. Then shall we enjoy the comfort of Christian peace. It is written : ' Trust in the Lord, and do good, and dwell in the land, and thou shalt be fed with its riches. Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart ' (Ps. xxxvi. 3, 4).

Devout Christian, value the blessings of grace, and seek your paramount happiness in doing God's good pleasure. Then will God's hand be with you, and His rewards will await you ; for it is written : ' The Lord loveth judgment, and will not forsake His Saints : they shall be preserved for ever ' (Ps. xxxvi. 28). Ask Mary, your heavenly Protectress, to obtain for you grace to persevere in piety, that the work of her Divine Son may be brought to its happy everlasting issue in your regard.

January 28.

HAPPY RESULTS OF THE INCARNATION.

I. St. Paul, in comforting words, points out the blessings God has bestowed on mankind through the Incarnation : ' Hath He not also with Him given us all things ?' (Rom. viii. 32). Shaking off from us the dust of what is earthly, and casting up our glance on high, we may in spirit penetrate to the very throne of the eternal, omnipotent God, and address Him as ' our Father Who art in Heaven.' This is the Divine Father Who gave us His Son : ' God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son ' (St. John iii. 16). How honoured are we, seeing that God the Son has become our Brother ! And how great, too, is our privilege in being His subjects, for He is our King ! More than this, He is our Good Shepherd, our truest Friend, our Teacher, and our Model. Therefore does He protect, guide, and instruct us. In Him are all perfections—wisdom, power, love, and mercy ; and all these are displayed and employed for the benefit of mankind. Through Him we are cleansed from sin and sanctified (1 Cor. vi. 11), and lifted up by grace above the ways of sin, to a life hidden in Himself. St. Paul says : ' Your life is hid with Christ in God ' (Col. iii. 3). How perverse are men who, disregarding spiritual things, seek only earthly satisfactions ! They fail to realize the better things purchased for men by our Divine Saviour.

Devout Christian, in the midst of the distractions of life, let the bright light of faith, and the desire of heavenly blessings, keep your heart from straying from Christ. Ever place His love and His will before and above every other consideration. Then will His holy grace be your support and consolation, and your heart will be at peace.

II. Christ, as St. Paul assures us, belongs to us, for God has given Him to us ; and we also belong to Him, for

He has purchased us by His Blood. In the Incarnation He became the Son of Man, and drew men to Himself by the cords of Adam. Raised as He now is to His throne in Heaven, these cords have not been broken; His Sacred Heart still beats for men. He is their Advocate with the Father; with His precious wounds and infinite merits He pleads for countless blessings for them. He has left on earth every provision for their salvation. His Spirit and His grace ever live in the Church, which He has made the medium of His teaching and of other blessings necessary for men's salvation. Furthermore, we have His Eucharistic Presence in the Holy Mass, in which He renews day by day the sacrifice of Himself to His Heavenly Father; and in the Holy Communion, in which He nourishes our soul with His own Body and Blood. Could He belong more fully to us under the circumstances of our present existence? And could He, under these same circumstances, do more for those whom He claims as His own? How foolish and ungrateful are men who, having before them so many consoling tokens of Christ's love, yet disregard His gentle but imperative demands of their love and service! Of how many priceless blessings they thus deprive themselves!

Devout Christian, recognize with unfeigned joy and gratitude that Christ is everything to you. Seek ever to avail yourself of the immense store of benefits which His Incarnation has laid up for you, and which is open to all who live in His grace and friendship. Drive from your heart every sentiment of fear and sadness. Say with David: 'I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me' (Ps. xxii. 4).

III. Our Divine Lord came into the world to be our Teacher, and to afford us every means necessary for salvation. Through Him, then, do we receive the light of heavenly doctrine, and the grace that strengthens our soul, and enables it to walk in the ways of duty and holiness. We cannot but see that our Lord's coming, and the spread of His teaching and of the means of grace, must have been marked by signal benefits to society; for

grace corrects what is evil, and promotes what is good. Under its influence human passions have been controlled, wonderful works of charity and mercy have been accomplished, and the relations between the different classes of society have been adjusted. Another result of the Divine Incarnation is seen in the character of man's acceptance of death. The just man trusts that, when his soul shall have disengaged itself from the bonds of this passing life, it will issue gloriously from the darkness of its earthly prison to enter into the light of eternal life. Then, in the light of glory, and glowing with the radiance of heavenly adornments, it shall enjoy for ever the vision of God. The just man will also look forward to the time when his body, called from the tomb, shall put on incorruption, and pass into the celestial realms to partake for ever of the bliss of the Saints.

Devout Christian, ever thank your loving Saviour for the countless blessings now experienced, and yet in store for you, which result from His coming. Strive ever to co-operate with His grace. Ask Mary, your tender, heavenly Mother, to preserve you by her prayers from neglecting to use the means of persevering in grace. Pray that the fruits of grace may appear in the pious character of your life.

January 29.

SOME FRUITS OF OUR LORD'S COMING.

I. Our Lord came into the world to bless mankind, and to raise it up from its miseries, and establish it in grace. As our Redeemer and our Good Shepherd, He manifested the greatest of devotedness to our welfare, and gave His life to save us. He washed away our sins, and opened to us the fountains of sanctification, and the everlasting kingdom. He gave us power to be made the sons of God (St. John i. 12); and through Him the Heavenly Father 'hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places' (Eph. i. 3). Through our Lord's teaching, and through His grace, our mind is comforted with the knowledge that God is our Father, and that He desires our conversion, our sanctification, and our salvation. Our Lord is to us the manifestation of the Father, displaying in our regard the Divine mercy, goodness, and love. This manifestation continues in the operations of grace ever going on in the souls of men; so that the blessings of our Lord's coming and work have reached us. If we are enlightened in heavenly teaching, if we are encouraged to labour for the heavenly crown, if we are supported under the trials of life, if we are instructed in the ways of virtue, we owe it all to our Lord, Who graciously continues His work in the world in every age, for the sanctification and salvation of His elect.

Devout Christian, recognize how richly you are blessed. Attach yourself with fervent devotion to our Lord. Study the blessings He has brought to mankind. Worship God with praise, thanksgiving, and joy, for 'it is truly meet and just, right and salutary' (Preface).

II. Through our Lord's coming the world was brought from the darkness of unbelief and superstition to the

glorious light of the knowledge of God. Men were taught to know their Divine Creator, and their own heavenly destiny. They were drawn from the evil path of licentiousness to the way of Christian virtue and perfection. A change came over the face of the earth. The temples and false rites of paganism were abolished, and men were freed from its base slavery. Religion and piety were quickly disseminated, and charity found its way into the heart of society. How lamentable had been the condition of the world without these heaven-born gifts! But, alas! what do we see to-day? Through neglect of religion, of the means of grace, and of spiritual things, and through disregard of the Church and her holy guidance, the world is returning to its former miserable condition from which Christianity raised it. Another fruit of our Lord's coming was the love of the Cross. That love was planted deep in the hearts of Christ's followers, to draw them from inordinate love of the world and its transitory pleasures, and to lift them up to attachment to God and eternal blessings. This led the world to persecute Christians, and to raise its unholy standard in mortal conflict against the Church. But victory is ever on God's side, and the Cross remains triumphant after all these centuries.

Devout Christian, thank God for the blessing of your holy faith. Be not slothful or inconstant in the practice of religion. Love the ways of piety, charity, and self-denial. Then will you be victorious over all your spiritual enemies, and true to Christ.

III. If we look for some manifestation of the fruits of our Lord's work in the world, we should study the lives of the holy Apostles, Martyrs, Missionaries, Confessors, and Virgins, whose lives, virtues, struggles, and works, are the glory of the Church. What a picture they display of the power of grace! How eminently the perfection of the Gospel teaching shines forth in their virtues! We should also study the proofs of religion and piety manifested in Catholic worship, in the frequentation of the Holy Sacraments, and in the grand and consoling picture of charity witnessed in the many works carried on for the benefit of

the distressed, the sick, the aged, and the fallen, in every part of the Church. All this should make us look up with thankfulness to our Lord, Whose coming on earth has led to such happy and glorious results. We ourselves are partakers of the fruits of His coming. How much there is, in what we have been considering, to encourage us to lead a virtuous life, and to desire to have some part with those devoted followers of our Lord who spend their lives in works for the benefit of religion, or of their neighbour. Alas, that irreligious governments, secret societies, and men without faith, should strive to impede the work of our Lord carried on by the Church for the spread of religion, and the amelioration of society!

Devout Christian, open your heart to the graces which result from our Lord's infinite merits. Be faithful to prayer, love devotion, frequent the Holy Sacraments. You will not, then, receive God's grace in vain; for you will grow in piety and virtue, and you will be ever desirous of serving God with fidelity in your particular calling in life. Ask Mary, the Mother of our Saviour, to obtain for you a spirit of true devotedness to her Divine Son, and to His Church.

January 30.

'I DIE DAILY.'—I.

I. ST. PAUL teaches all Christians a very salutary lesson when he says: 'I die daily' (1 Cor. xv. 31). He so lived as to be every day ready to die. He foresaw what many term the dread possibilities which death presents, and he prepared himself for them. He was every day ready to welcome the hour of his departure. Our Lord had not said to him in vain: 'Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands, and you yourselves like to men who wait for their lord' (St. Luke xii. 35, 36). Like life itself, every day has its beginning and its close: there is every day the dawn, the full light, the twilight, and the close of day. Men live through it, every day measuring a fresh step taken towards the grave. Though now in the broad daylight of life, they are yet ever drawing nearer to the night 'when no man can work' (St. John ix. 4). Christians who are wise strive to imitate St. Paul: they do not leave to the future their preparation for death. By spending every day in a truly Christian manner, they prepare themselves daily for their departure. Such conduct saves them from misgiving and fear, and causes them peace of mind and reassurance about the future.

Devout Christian, do not neglect or postpone your preparation for God's summons. Our Lord says: 'Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching' (St. Luke xii. 37). How miserable will your life be if you are always unprepared! Desire only the good pleasure of God as to the time of your death; but take care, by God's grace, to live every day prepared for it. Sweet consolations will reward this daily preparation.

II. How should Christians die daily? There must be

a daily death to sin, to creatures, to the world, and to ourselves, in as far as these would cause us to offend God and thus become an impediment to our spiritual welfare. There should be a separation of the soul's affections from everything that would keep us from God; and our dispositions should be such that we should be prepared now, according to God's good pleasure, to part with everything that we shall have actually to part with when we come to die. We must strive to realize by the spiritual character of our lives what St. Paul spoke of when he said: 'For you are dead: and your life is hid with Christ in God' (Col. iii. 3). Such a manner of life will not make Christians gloomy and unhappy, but happy and joyous, because it will be a life free from attachment to sin and from those spiritual miseries which cause distress and uneasiness. Christians die daily by refraining themselves now from those things which at death they will wish to have refrained from, and by doing now those things which at death they will wish to have done.

Recognize, devout Christian, the wisdom and the advantages of dying daily. Why will you allow any creature or any earthly gain to come between you and God, the Sovereign Good? God is everything to you: give your whole heart to Him every day and for always. Avoid everything that may be to the prejudice of the love and service which it should be your happiness to offer Him, and you will then be ready every day to die.

III. To die daily we must renounce and avoid every day whatever would displease God and whatever would be opposed to His service, and we should use the things of this world without being unduly attached to them. St. Paul says: 'The time is short: it remaineth that . . . they that use this world be as if they used it not: for the fashion of this world passeth away' (1 Cor. vii. 29, 31). It is evident that there is a danger in being attached to creatures and to our present surroundings. The greater this attachment is, the keener will be the pang of leaving them, and the less easily shall we come to relish what will advance our spiritual and eternal interests. We certainly

owe a duty to our fellow-creatures which may demand respect, interest, and affection ; but our service or attachment must not be inordinate or excessive, so as to be opposed to God's good pleasure or commandments. Sincere Christians die daily to the world that they may live to God. God's grace and His love are their richest treasures, and their delight is in His service. He in return gives comfort and joy to their heart, and He protects them from their spiritual enemies, and secures them from danger even amidst the shadows of death.

Detach your heart, devout Christian, from inordinate love of the world and of creatures, for this love will prevent you from dying daily so as to live to God. Offer your life and your works every day to God, and ask every day for God's blessing upon them. Beg of Mary to obtain for you three precious favours—grace to avoid whatever might prove a stumbling-block to your salvation, a spirit of detachment from the world and its pleasures, and a desire of being united to God.

January 3.

'I DIE DAILY.'—II.

I. LET us reflect upon some of the happy results of dying daily. While those who will not permit themselves to think of death are harassed by a fear of it, and attach themselves to this passing world, those, on the other hand, who seek to die daily, are detached from all inordinate love of this present life and of the world in which it is spent. These latter are saved from the folly of making this world their one engrossing thought; they do not take it, with its ways, maxims, and behests, for their guide and master; and they enjoy a freedom from its slavery. Having their eyes fixed on their eternal destiny, they meet the vicissitudes and dangers of this present life with patience, courage, and equanimity. Dying daily to the world and to themselves, their affections are purified and wisely regulated. These Christians, therefore, avoid all inordinate attachments, and they keep their hearts from attractions that might prove an obstacle to religion or to virtue. Thus do they wisely check and correct the fickleness and waywardness of their poor hearts of flesh and blood, and regulate their lives under the guidance of the laws of Christian prudence, and according to the requirements of the Divine law.

Devout Christian, seek to die daily, so that you may be free from inordinate love of the world and of creatures; for such inordinate love is an obstacle to your spiritual welfare and to true peace of heart. Be not like those who, having heard the word of God, 'Going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit' (St. Luke viii. 14).

II. Dying daily is also a corrective of self-love. When men live in the daily conviction that they must be ever

prepared for the future life, and that their lives should have for object ends and gains nobler and more lasting than any which their present surroundings offer, they are led to endeavour to realize what their heavenly destiny demands of them in sentiment, affection, and conduct. In making this desirable effort they labour to correct the aspirations and leadings of self-love, which would hold them trammelled by their own unspiritual ideas, foolish affections, and miserable weaknesses. How wanting generally in loftiness are the motives and aims which regulate men's lives, and what self-interest underlies even deeds that seem to be noble! How often self-love is the principle of action! Christians who die to themselves daily that they may live to God pursue a loftier course of action. Not that their deeds are striking in character; they may be only the ordinary actions of everyday life, but they are performed with supernatural motives which make them meritorious in the eyes of God. Their daily life is regulated not by self-love, but by God's will and by God's love.

Devout Christian, correct the self-love that would dominate your conduct and thus spoil the merit of your actions. If you serve your own self-love you will experience disappointment, but if you regulate your conduct by the lofty motive of pleasing God, you will meet with contentment now, and you will harvest the heavenly reward for hereafter.

III. To die daily is to be ready to die when death actually comes. This is another happy result of dying daily. The sting and the dread will have been taken away, and death will be met placidly and resignedly. Death will not, then, come as a surprise, and there will be no inconsiderate bustle and alarm. Christians who die daily will be prepared for all the separations and partings that are incidental to death; they will be ready to leave all to gain all; they will look calmly into the future; and they will sigh for their union with God. Men, whether they wish it or not, will at death have to leave behind them for ever this world's goods and pleasures: to do this will

cost but little to those who have not been unduly attached to them. Dying daily will finally lessen the terrors of the judgment that will follow death; for Christians who practise it will have known themselves and will have every day judged themselves, and they will have striven to correct their faults and to atone for them.

Devout Christian, you have it in your power now so to live that you may not fear to die. So die to yourself and to the world that you may be able to say with St. Paul: 'I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.' If you die daily you will secure for yourself confidence and peace when death overtakes you. Beseech Mary to take you under her holy protection, and to obtain for you that heavenly wisdom which will make you esteem everything according to its relation to everlasting life. There is no escape from the present life except through death. May Mary's intercession obtain for you the grace to prepare for a happy death.

February 1.

KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS.

I. It is most important to all Christians, if they would be saved, that they should both know and observe God's commandments. The servant and the child must know the duties of the service and submission under which they live; so must the Christian understand the duties to be fulfilled as a condition of eternal salvation. Upon an occasion, a certain man came to our Lord, and kneeling before Him asked: 'Good Master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?' We all wish to know our Lord's answer to this wise and important question. Jesus answered: 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments' (St. Matt. xix. 17). If, then, we would be children of grace now, and if we would be comforted with hope for the future, we must know, reverence, and observe God's law. David says: 'Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. . . . Thou hast commanded Thy commandments to be kept most diligently' (Ps. cxviii. 1, 4). If God is the supreme and eternal Sovereign, He must have His law, and all must diligently and devotedly observe it. Sinners are men who do not keep the Divine law. Of them David said: 'Salvation is far from sinners; because they have not sought Thy justifications.' Therefore was he sad, and he went on to say: 'I beheld the transgressors, and I pined away; because they kept not Thy word' (Ps. cxviii. 155, 158).

Devout Christian, recognize dutifully the importance and the sanctity of God's law. Outside of the observance of the commandments is the path of unprofitable and disastrous licence and sin. Say with David: 'I am ready

and am not troubled : that I may keep Thy commandments ' (Ps. cxviii. 60).

II. As God moved the Israelites to trust in Him by the wonders of His power in delivering them from Pharaoh ; so, by the terrible displays at Sinai, did He inspire them with awe, in order to move them to reverence for His law, and to obedience to His commands. These events recorded in Holy Scripture should move us also in the same manner : ' They are written for our correction ' (1 Cor. x. 11). Let us ever regard obedience to God's holy commandments as both necessary and salutary. Let us not imitate so many undutiful men who take up a false position with regard to God and His rights over them, who misunderstand the gift of free-will and abuse it. This gift to us from God magnifies our dignity, and imparts true value to our submission ; but it does not free us from our allegiance. God's Sovereignty remains complete and eternal, and it is our most necessary duty ever to acknowledge it by a faithful observance of the commandments. Alas, that many men so use their free-will as though it rendered them independent of God's absolute claim upon their worship and service ! Let us dutifully use our free-will by keeping God's commandments exactly, willingly, and lovingly. David says : ' Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord : he shall delight exceedingly in His commandments ' (Ps. cxi. 1).

Devout Christian, beware of the independent spirit which proceeds from a deep-rooted pride ; but let it be your delight to render God a humble, ready, and complete service. Love the lesser points of the law, and observe them because you desire in all things to submit to the Divine will ; then will you not offend in matters of graver moment.

III. How foolish are men, when, disregarding God's most holy and wise commandments, they prefer to follow the bent of their own perverse will ! Is it to be wondered at that God should then permit them to run to their own destruction ? They, indeed, forego the reward which would be theirs if only they obeyed God's law, and they

incur the dreadful punishment which is the portion of men who break that law. The mystery of Hell ever reminds us of the fall of the rebellious Angels, and of the fatal results of mortal sin; yet men continue to break God's commandments. Would that men's consciences and lives, and society in general, were ever regulated by God's wise and holy laws! How different would then be the condition of our earthly existence! and how many more souls would be saved! Unstable Christians, who are unfaithful in your obedience to the Most High, 'how long do you halt between two sides? if the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him' (3 Kings xviii. 21). When will you recognize that your own truest interests, your present and everlasting peace and happiness, depend upon your keeping the commandments?

Devout Christian, our Lord says to you: 'If you love Me, keep My commandments' (St. John xiv. 15). Let no earthly gain, irregular affection, or base satisfaction seduce you from dutiful obedience to the Divine law. Ask Mary, the 'Mirror of Justice,' to obtain for you grace, not to be led astray, but to desire to obey only God's commands, and to do this at any cost.

February 2.

OUR LADY'S PURIFICATION.

I. St. Luke, having recorded the circumcision of the Divine Infant, continues his history, saying: 'And after the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord' (St. Luke ii. 22). Mary, although a spotless virgin, yet submitted to this rite of the Old Law. We see in her conduct an admirable obedience and an unassuming humility. She said nothing concerning her Divine maternity and her most pure virginity: she appeared like other women, and she fulfilled all the requirements of the Law, and offered the usual sacrifice. We see in this event one of the fulfilments of the prophecy: 'Presently the Lord Whom you seek, and the Angel of the testament, Whom you desire, shall come to His temple!' (Mal. iii. 1). Mary was on that occasion as a High Priestess, offering to God His most beloved Son made Man. She made this offering with most perfect and acceptable dispositions. No such offering had previously been made in that holy temple. She beheld herself privileged to offer God His own Son for all the ends of sacrifice, even as a thank-offering, a peace-offering, and an offering for the sins of the world. Her humility enhanced the fragrance of her piety.

Devout Christian, admire in spirit the scene of Mary's first visit to the temple after our Lord's birth. Meditate upon her acts, but more particularly upon her holy dispositions. Love humility. Be assured that if you were ever unhappily to fall away from humility, you would at the same time and in the same degree become less pious. Let humility nourish your piety, and your piety will procure for you grace to preserve you in humility.

II. The persons who come under our notice in the temple at the time of the ceremony of the Purification are holy Simeon and Anna. They were pious and favoured servants of God. Of Simeon it is written : ' This man was just and devout . . . and the Holy Ghost was in him ' (St. Luke ii. 25). How highly favoured he was we learn from what follows : ' He had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord.' The promise was fulfilled, for we read : ' He came by the Spirit into the temple. And when His parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the Law, he [Simeon] also took Him into his arms, and blessed God.' Of Anna it is written that she ' departed not from the temple, by fastings and prayers serving night and day. And she at the same hour coming in, confessed to the Lord.' If God has compassion on sinners, and extends to them the arms of His mercy and love, He has also special and abundant favours for His devout servants. He comforts them with the blessings of His grace and of His peace. So was it in the case of Simeon and Anna ; and so, in due measure, will it be in our case, if, despising worldly vanities, and avoiding evil, we prove ourselves faithful servants of God.

Devout Christian, love the path of the just, and await with patience God's consolations. They will yet come to you, as they came, after patient waiting, to Simeon and Anna.

III. When holy Simeon saw how God had heard his prayer, and comforted him with the vision of his Saviour, he broke forth, giving utterance to his satisfaction in his prophetic canticle : ' Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace.' He added words of praise of Jesus, declaring His glorious mission. And while Mary and Joseph were wondering at all they heard, Simeon, addressing Mary, added the following prophecy : ' Behold, this Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed.'

O Mary, you must share, not always in body, but ever in your soul, the sufferings of your Son; and even as hearts are won to Him by reason of His sacred Passion, so shall they be drawn to you on account of your sorrows. In this event of the Purification, we see how the sweet joys it caused Mary are mingled with sorrow. Let us recognize that such is the course of our present life, which is made up of various experiences. Therefore Solomon says: 'All things have their season, and in their times all things pass under Heaven' (Eccles. iii. 1).

Devout Christian, continue to embrace dutifully the dispensations of God's providence, and to fulfil the enactments of His law. Many men, alas! will fall and be lost for whom our Lord prepared grace and mercy. Beseech Mary, your heavenly Patroness, to obtain for you grace ever to correspond with your Saviour's loving designs in your regard, that you may ever be associated with His true servants in this present life and that, purified from every stain of sin, you may hereafter be associated with the blessed in His kingdom.

February 3.

DIVINE ADOPTION.

I. Our Lord came into the world, taking unto Himself our nature, and making us His brethren, that we might, by a supernatural and spiritual generation, or regeneration, become the children of God. This is what St. John teaches when he says: 'As many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His Name' (St. John i. 12). Through our Lord, then, we attain to the inestimable blessing of Divine adoption with all its glorious consequences. He bids us address God as 'our Father Who art in Heaven.' When He had risen from the dead, He said to Mary Magdalen: 'Go to My brethren, and say to them; I ascend to My Father and to your Father' (St. John xx. 17). By such words as these did our Lord manifest the reality and extent of the Divine adoption conferred upon us. St. John refers to it elsewhere, saying: 'Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God. Therefore the world knoweth not us, because it knew Him not. Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him: because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone that hath this hope in Him, sanctifieth himself, as He also is holy' (1 St. John iii. 1-3). Because we are the children of God, God loves us as such; He watches over us with a special providence, and He makes us heirs of His kingdom.

Devout Christian, try to realize the exaltedness of your dignity as the adopted child of God, and to live worthy of it. How sincere your effort should be to do good works, to be pious, and to advance in virtue! Despise, then, anew

the pomps of Satan and the vanities of the world; for these would turn you from the manner of life befitting the children of God and heirs of Heaven.

II. We should regard our adoption as children of God as one of the most precious fruits of our Lord's Incarnation and Redemption. At what a cost this privileged dignity has been purchased for us! We have been rescued from the empire of Satan, and transferred to the Kingdom of God, by the sacred Passion and Death of Christ, and this incomparable benefit is applied to us individually by means of the holy Sacrament of Baptism. In this sacrament, and through its efficacy, we are 'born again of water and the Holy Ghost' (St. John iii. 5), and regenerated to become children of God. Let us ever admire the ways in which God blesses us, and bestows upon us gifts and distinctions beyond all value. The sacred character stamped upon the soul in Baptism impresses upon the soul a spiritual likeness to Christ; and God at the same time establishes us in His grace, by which, as St. Peter says, we are 'made partakers of the Divine nature' (2 St. Pet. i. 4). God's sanctifying grace clothes the soul with supernatural beauty, and renders it the good ground capable of producing, through actual graces, spiritual fruits—namely, virtues and meritorious works. These are the seed of glory, and the passport to the heavenly inheritance. 'It hath not yet appeared what we shall be.'

Devout Christian, recognize with gratitude the blessings bestowed upon you in your baptism. You experience day by day, while you live in God's grace, the effects of that Holy Sacrament, which enables you to live by faith and to lead a Christian life; but all this is in view of the future. All this prepares you to be a participator in the heavenly inheritance. Lift up your eyes with hope and with joy to the land of promise.

III. Great as will be the glory of the children of God in the heavenly kingdom, they must be prepared to walk now in humility, and even to be despised. Was it not thus in our Lord's case? Will it not be so in ours? Listen to our Lord's words: 'The hour is come, that the Son of

Man should be glorified. Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground, die; itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it: and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal' (St. John xii. 23-25). Through scenes of humiliation and suffering, our Lord passed to the possession of heavenly glory; and our glorious destiny must be achieved in a somewhat similar manner. In those scenes, however, He gave evidence of His Divinity by His admirable works, teachings, and virtues. So, too, must the excellence of the Christian shine forth, amidst the trials of this present life, in his conduct and virtues, which should be in keeping with his dignity of a child of God. St. Peter says: 'But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people: that you may declare His virtues, Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light' (1 St. Pet. ii. 9). St. Paul says: 'Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. . . . And if sons, heirs also: heirs, indeed, of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: yet so if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him' (Rom. viii. 14, 17).

Devout Christian, reflect upon the significance of this teaching. See how you must show forth that you are a child of God, and upon what terms you will receive the inheritance. Place yourself with confidence under the care of Mary, Queen of Heaven, and beg through her intercession, humility, patience, and all the other virtues that are looked for in those who are children of God and followers of Jesus Christ.

February 4.

MAN'S DIGNITY.

I. It is written: 'What is man that Thou art mindful of him' (Ps. viii. 5). God's dealings with us, as we see them in the mysteries of Creation and Redemption, should convince us of our high dignity; and our sense of this should fill us with gratitude to God, and lead us to correspond with God's designs in our regard, and to respect in ourselves the dignity bestowed on us. When subjects have faithfully served their prince, and merited well of them, they have been raised to high dignities and have received many favours from their prince; but how has it been with man in his relations with God? When man had fallen away from God and lost the heavenly inheritance bestowed on him, he was stained with guilt, debased by his ingratitude, deprived of original justice, and heir of eternal woe. Yet God did not despise him, nor did He visit him in anger. No; He opened to man the fountain of His infinite mercy, and promised him redemption, which should be effected by His own Divine Son. God's own Son should assume man's nature, and embrace all mankind in the arms of His immense and most tender charity. The Holy Ghost, too, should descend upon men who should be prepared for His coming by the grace of the Son, and He should establish His indwelling in their souls. To what a lofty dignity these Divine dispensations should raise man! 'What is man that Thou art mindful of him. . . . Thou hast crowned him with honour and glory.'

Devout Christian, you are no longer 'of the earth earthly' (1 Cor. xv. 47); but Christ has raised you in dignity. St. Paul says: 'Therefore, as we have borne the image of the earthly, let us bear also the image of the heavenly.'

II. In the natural order man is raised in this world above all the other creatures of the earth. It is written : ' Thou hast set him over the works of Thy hands. Thou hast subjected all things under his feet ' (Ps. viii. 7, 8) ; ' Let us make man to Our image and likeness,' with dominion over every living creature (Gen. i. 26). Created to the image of his Divine Creator, and raised to the highest dignity, man has been endowed with noble faculties of mind and will, and with spiritual gifts to enable him to know, love, and serve God, and to fulfil the other conditions of salvation. Solomon asked himself : ' What is man that he can follow the King his Maker ?' (Eccles. ii. 12). God insisted upon the respect due to man's dignity, where He said to Noe and his sons : ' Whosoever shall shed man's blood, his blood shall be shed : for man was made to the image of God ' (Gen. ix. 6). In the spiritual order, through the Incarnation and grace, God Himself has become our own Father, the Son of God has made Himself our Brother, and the Holy Ghost has made us His temples (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17 ; vi. 19). Mary, too, has been constituted our heavenly Mother ; Jesus in the most holy Eucharist is our Victim and our Food ; and holy Church has been established as a spiritual fold wherein our souls are cared for, guided, healed, and prepared for the heavenly fold of Christ's eternal kingdom. All this should convince us of man's dignity, and of God's bountiful provision for our well-being both now and for all eternity.

Devout Christian, while recognizing the wonders of the Divine plan for man's honour and happiness, lament with sincere sorrow the blindness and ingratitude of so many men who are heedless of the Divine dispensations, and who dishonour their body and soul by sin, and waste their life through neglect of their spiritual welfare.

III. Even though the lifting up of man after the Fall should demand that the Son of God should empty Himself, and take the form of a servant, and humble Himself, becoming obedient unto death—even so, all this would be done (Phil. ii. 7, 8). God humbled Himself that man might be exalted. St. Peter says of us : ' You are a chosen

generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people' (1 St. Pet. ii. 9). How do men respect their dignity, and repay the Divine Goodness? Many, alas! forget their Divine Benefactor, and lead no better lives than do unbelievers. They make but little effort to check their evil inclinations, they become victims of intemperance or of impurity, they neglect the worship of God, they live only for this world, and they fail to edify their neighbour. How different is their conduct from that of God's true servants! These remember that God has created them for noble ends; they listen to our Saviour's teaching; and they seek to sanctify their life by keeping God's commandments, by prayer, by availing themselves of the means of grace, and by practising the Christian virtues. Who, then, shall attain to the crown of life, to the heavenly reward? Those shall who have respected their Christian dignity, and laboured for the Christian's crown. St. Paul says: 'He also that striveth for the mastery is not crowned except he strive lawfully' (2 Tim. ii. 5). Alas, for those who do not strive at all!

Devout Christian, let it comfort you in the labours, anxieties, and sorrows of this present life, to remember to what dignity you have been raised by your calling and election, and to look forward with a firm hope to the glorious crown prepared for you in the future life. Ask Mary, your heavenly Mother and Protectress, to obtain for you grace to correspond with God's loving designs in your regard, and to live ever worthy of your exalted dignity.

February 5.

HATRED OF SIN.

I. Reflect that in the battle of Christian life, the greatest struggle is that which must ever be maintained against sin. Sin, and especially mortal sin, is the great evil which all Christians must ever abhor. Sin opposes and destroys the work of grace, weakens faith, vitiates man's will, and draws away his affection from what is good. Through mortal sin the creature of God becomes an abomination in His eyes, and His child becomes His enemy. If men hate the temporal evils that destroy their peace and happiness, with what greater reason and with what keener sentiment should they not hate that great evil that deprives them of God's friendship, of peace of conscience, and of everlasting happiness. But these are not the only consequences of mortal sin, for it also brings upon men God's anger and His everlasting punishments.

Pray, devout Christian, that your heart may be resolutely turned away from all evil, and even from all danger of evil, remembering the words: 'He that loveth danger shall perish in it' (Ecclus. iii. 27). Let your one sorrow be to have sinned, and your one dread lest you should ever sin again. Pray that this may never be. St. Paul said to men converted from sin: 'What fruit therefore had you then in those things of which you are now ashamed. For the end of them is death' (Rom. vi. 21). Be wise, and seek ever to walk in the holy path that leads to everlasting life.

II. We read in the Holy Scriptures: 'Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent' (Ecclus. xxi. 2), and: 'They that commit sin and iniquity, are enemies to their own soul' (Tob. xii. 10). These passages teach Christians to beware of the delusions by which they are often led into sin; for

they will yet experience, if they fall, that they have received a poisonous and deadly bite, and have done themselves a serious injury. As far as Christians themselves are concerned, the injury done by sin is irreparable; so that, if God were to deny them the grace of true conversion, they would remain for ever in their condition of sin. The loss of all worldly possessions, dignities, and pleasures would be nothing when compared with the loss of God's grace, brought about by even one single mortal sin. With grace there departs also from the soul true peace: 'There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord' (Isa. xlviii. 22). Evils sad, bitter, and everlasting, accumulate over the head of the sinner. If Christians were God-loving and wise, they would, aided by grace, spare themselves so great a misfortune as that which mortal sin brings upon them; they would hate it, and carefully avoid exposing themselves to it.

Devout Christian, put your spiritual and eternal interest before every consideration of friendship, human respect, gain, or pleasure, when any such consideration would expose you to offend God. By being loyal to God, you are also loyal to yourself and to your own welfare. Beware of the weaknesses of nature, of the evil influence of those who give disedification, and of the seductions of the world. Hate sin, no matter under what guise it may conceal itself.

III. Christians must hate sin because of the evil that it is in itself, and because of its evil consequences; they must hate it when temptation to sin, or danger of sin, arises; and they must also hate it when they have had the misfortune to commit sin. Some persons, victims of an insidious pride, are disturbed after sin, not by their having wickedly offended God, but by the detection of their weakness by their neighbour, or by some other such wound to their self-love. Disturbance of mind proceeding from such causes is a poor foundation for sincere repentance, so relapse into sin will most likely follow. Such disturbance of mind is very different from that hatred of sin which is based upon the love of God, and which effectually

moves the repentant sinner to avoid sin. The God-loving and God-fearing Christian imbued with this holy hatred, says to himself: 'Let Heaven and earth perish rather than that God should be offended by sin!' And he deplores the misery of his present condition, seeing that notwithstanding his efforts and his repeated repentance, he yet offends God in many ways.

Pray, devout Christian, for the grace of a sincere and effectual hatred of sin. Remember that the more truly you love God, the more earnestly will you strive by His grace to avoid sin. Watch over yourself, and strive to correct your weaknesses, and to amend your negligences. Beseech Mary most pure to obtain for you a sincere zeal for God's glory and for your own amendment, that you may ever deplore your shortcomings and strive to avoid your usual failings.

February 6.

HAPPY RESULTS OF HATING SIN—I.

I. We read in Isaias (lix. 2) : ' Your iniquities have divided between you and your God '—words which tell us how evil a thing mortal sin is. If *it* separates us from the Sovereign Good, what draws us to that Sovereign Good is a constant and effectual hatred of sin. Such a hatred is attended by many blessings and happy consequences. It disposes the soul for grace, and draws it in the way of religiousness and virtue. It is one of the signs of true wisdom, for no one who is wise will love what is evil. The holy Writer says : ' Wisdom inspireth life into her children, and protecteth them that seek after her, and will go before them in the way of justice. . . . God loveth them that love her ' (Ecclus. iv. 12, 15). While Christians have a sincere hatred of sin, they will persevere in the life of grace, for they will be protected and aided by a special providence of God ; therefore does David say : ' You that love the Lord, hate evil : the Lord preserveth the souls of His Saints, He will deliver them out of the hand of the sinner ' (Ps. xcvi. 10).

Persevere, devout Christian, in your hatred of sin, and you will not fall a victim to its temptations and delusions. Ever turn to God as to your only Good, and pray that you may never fall away from His love. Conceive how sad it would be if you were ever to cease to hate sin. Are you not bound to love God with your whole heart ? Let there be no place in your heart for the love of evil.

II. Reflect that Christians who truly hate sin are not only disposed for grace and drawn to God, but they are also so enlightened by Him that they readily detect the dangers of sin, the snares of the wicked, the stumbling-blocks in the way of virtue, the delusions created by passion, and the wiles of Satan, by which they are beset. The Holy Ghost

imparts to them a sensitiveness of soul which makes them aware of the presence of danger, and fills them with dread of doing wrong. This sensitiveness is a precious grace. Who will be so wicked as to endeavour, by evil advice or by imparting false notions, to lessen it, or to destroy it? St. Paul says: 'The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God' (1 Cor. ii. 14). Christians should treasure and foster this Heaven-given sensitiveness, and they should not listen to those who say that there is no evil when their own conscience tells them that there is. This sensitiveness, if it be allowed to guide their conduct, will save them from many faults and from many misgivings, and will produce peace and joy in the soul.

Devout Christian, if you would be guileless, follow the dictates of conscience. Then will you instinctively detect the danger of sin, and escape both its secret snares and its open temptations. Pray to the Sacred Heart to inflame your fickle heart with the fire of Divine charity, that you may ever hate the ways of evil and seek only in all you do to please God.

III. Reflect that Christians who truly hate sin are formidable to the Evil Spirits who tempt men, for they are strengthened with supernatural force. Witness the conduct of the holy Martyrs, who command our admiration by their indomitable constancy, and of the holy Confessors and Virgins who led blameless lives, notwithstanding the assaults of Satan and the temptations, snares, and persecutions of the wicked. The wicked themselves are often forced to admire the noble constancy of Christians who detest all the ways of evil. It is God who strengthens these His servants, for He is their refuge and the source of their confidence. David comforts the just man with the assurance of God's special help, saying: 'He will overshadow thee with His shoulders, and under His wings thou shalt trust' (Ps. xc. 4). The sensitiveness which leads to the detection of evil and which inspires alarm, must be accompanied by a holy resoluteness not to be overcome by the enemy; and this is a grace that must be sought earnestly from God. God will hear the prayer, and will confirm

His servant in his good purposes, and give him victory over the enemy. He gives us this assurance, saying by the mouth of David : ' He shall cry to me, and I will hear him : I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him, and I will glorify him ' (Ps. xc. 15).

Be resolved, devout Christian, ever to hate sin, that you may ever be strengthened from on high, and experience the comfort of God's assistance. What blessings wait upon those who hate sin ! Beseech your heavenly Mother, the ' Mirror of Justice,' to obtain for you a holy sensitiveness, that may be to you an incentive to virtue and a shield against every kind of evil ; and ask her prayers upon every occasion of danger, that you may be warned, protected, and saved.

February 7.

HAPPY RESULTS OF HATING SIN—II.

I. Reflect that Christians who sincerely hate sin have their mind guided by superior notions of what is right. While relapsing sinners do not seem to care whether they serve God aright or not, these Christians who hate sin reckon it their chief duty to satisfy God's just claims to their love and service. This comes of the enlightenment with which their mind is gifted. Such Christians endeavour always to banish from their mind thoughts that are evil, dangerous, or foolish, while they seek to cherish such as are holy, useful, and healthy. Moreover, perceiving as they do more clearly the evil of sin, they see the necessity of avoiding the occasions of it, and they are careful not to put themselves under the influence of persons who would cause them to offend God, or lead them to love God less. Their clearer knowledge not only reveals to them the evil of sin, but it also enhances in their eyes the value and excellence of virtue and of religion. How precious and useful is this enlightenment, especially in the hour of temptation and delusion, which is so fatal to the unwary! The holy Writer says: 'Ye that fear the Lord love Him, and your hearts shall be enlightened' (Ecclus. ii. 10).

Devout Christian, if you would entertain thoughts and aspirations more in keeping with your Christian calling and with your heavenly destiny, hate always the ways of evil, and avoid those whose society, conversation, or conduct, might lessen your love of God and of all that is good. Your hatred of sin will be rewarded by a clearer knowledge of spiritual things, and this will be a help to virtue and a comfort to your mind.

II. Reflect that a true hatred of sin is rewarded by the grace of a more effective turning to our Lord. Christians

who hate sin, seek some other and more worthy object for their love : they are drawn to a truer spirit of the service of God, to higher aims in life, and to a more practical knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. How happily are they thus rewarded for turning away from what is their own greatest evil, one replete with most fatal and fearful consequences ! What joy fills the soul of the converted sinner when he feels his heart beating once more with the love of our Lord ! This joy is the constant comfort of all who persevere in a sincere hatred of sin : they are ever conscious that our Lord is their truest Friend. They feel devotion to Him, to His Sacred Heart, to His Passion, and to the Blessed Sacrament. Sentiments of devotion which sinners have no experience of, draw them in the path of piety, and satisfy the desires of their heart. They yield themselves willingly and loyally to our Lord's Sovereignty, and find their pleasure in His service and in conforming themselves to the dispensations of His will.

Devout Christian, let your hatred of sin move you to seek ever the paths of grace. If you nourish ever in your soul this holy hatred of evil, our Lord will become dearer to you, and He will comfort you by attracting you in the ways of piety. Then will your heart be moved by those pious affections and holy desires which will make you pleasing to the Sacred Heart, and which will merit for you a more abundant flow of Its graces.

III. Reflect, finally, that another happy result of hating sin is to assure Christians of their perseverance in grace. Men relapse into sin when they do not truly hate it ; but while they continue to abhor it, they dread it and avoid it. The Christians who have persevered and who have won their crowns are the Saints. One thing that made them Saints was their hatred of sin. St. Paul says to all Christians : 'This is the will of God, your sanctification' (1 Thes. iv. 3). Little do they heed this Divine will who commit sin, who expose themselves to sin, and who relapse into sin ; but Christians who sincerely hate sin and avoid it are the devout servants of God who walk in the path of their sanctification and tread the way to eternal life. Such

as these are comforted by the hope of perseverance, which expels misgiving and despair, and fills them with courage and with spiritual joy (Ps. xliv. 8).

Devout Christian, set up this barrier of hatred between your soul and sin. Feed this hatred by dwelling upon God's claim to your constant love, upon our Lord's cruel sufferings and death, upon the terrible consequences of mortal sin, and upon the gratitude you owe to God for all His mercies. The greater your hatred of all evil, the greater will be your assurance of perseverance in grace. Watch and pray. Ask Mary Immaculate to obtain for you a constant hatred of everything that would offend her Divine Son, and the blessings of steadfastness in virtue and of perseverance in grace.

February 8.

RELAPSE INTO SIN—I.

I. Reflect that Christians who after repentance relapse into sin prove ungrateful to God, and heedless of His claims to their entire and constant service. When they repented, it was by His grace which moved them that they did so; it was His infinite mercy that received them and pardoned them; and it was through the infinite merits of His Divine Son that forgiveness was bestowed. When they relapse God is lost sight of; some miserable satisfaction is sought; some fatal vice claims indulgence; some faulty affection must be gratified; or some paltry gain must be secured; the mind is once more turned from God to the creature, and the heart is once more perverted. Thus is God lost sight of: that He should be sinned against does not weigh with the relapsing sinner. Does the relapsing sinner remember the promises so solemnly made, and the mercy so bountifully bestowed, when he repented? It is now nothing to him—the evil passion, the inordinate affection, must be gratified. God must stand aside, and the base sinner must have his way. This is what occurs when Christians relapse into sin.

Devout Christian, deplore any relapse there may have been in your own case. Do not look back with any complacency upon the ways of evil. Do not grieve again the Holy Spirit of God; do not wound again the Sacred Heart; do not bring again your own soul to the doors of everlasting death.

II. Reflect, that relapse into sin on the part of Christians who have repented is a greater evil when accompanied by the relapse also of others. To lead others into sin or to cause them to love God less, is to do the devil's work; it is to deprive God of the love and service of His own creatures;

and it is also to rob our Lord of the souls He has redeemed. When Christians repented of any scandal or disedification they had given in any such ways, they were bound to repair the evil as far as lay in their power. What, then, should be thought of their conduct if they were not only to neglect to repair the scandal, but if they were also to repeat it, and thus to be once more, and perhaps frequently, the cause of the relapse of others into sin ? Do they weigh sufficiently the gravity of their sin, and of their responsibility ? Must God stand for ever aside while this evil continues and is repeated ? If He is thus despised, will not the time come when He will in turn despise and reject these relapsing sinners ? What an injustice is thus done to God, and what an evil is also inflicted upon those who are thus miserably led to offend Him !

Grieve, devout Christian, that God is thus, and so often, outraged by relapsing sinners. Offer Him in satisfaction the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. Beware of ever causing others to relapse into any kind of sin, and beware of any unhappy or dangerous influence that might cause you to fall back into any offence against God.

III. Reflect now upon the evil to their own souls inflicted by Christians who relapse into sin. They commit an outrage against God, they may also repeat some kind of scandal to others, and, moreover, they reduce their own souls to a condition of misery from which only an extraordinary grace can release them. This misery consists in the evil consequences of sin which they have brought once more upon their soul, in the darkening of their mind as to their sad condition, in the delusions of which they will avail themselves to underrate their guiltiness, in the increased power and importunity of their evil inclinations, in the spirit of dangerous indifference into which they have fallen, in the lamentable moral weakness which they experience, and in the magnified difficulty of sincere repentance and amendment which their condition of relapse has created. If they continue to repeat their falls, God may turn away from them and abandon them. Satan is in jubilation over their frequent falls, while the just in Heaven and on earth view

their case with sorrow, misgiving, and alarm; but they themselves remain hardened in the bondage of sin.

Devout Christian, pray that your repentance may always be sincere and lasting. Fear to turn again in the direction of your falls; do not run any risk of relapse. Beseech Mary, your heavenly Intercessor, to obtain for you the gift of constancy in the love and service of God, and a dread of all the ways of evil.

February 9.

RELAPSE INTO SIN—II.

I. The lamentable condition of Christians who after repentance return again to their sinful ways is represented in the Gospel by the return of the restless spirit to the dwelling it had quitted, for it returned with seven spirits worse than itself. Of such Christians it may be said that their last state becomes worse than the first. In their case through relapsing into sin, their passion or vice gains strength, their fatal weakness becomes more persistent, and their proneness to evil more pronounced ; while at the same time they become less inclined to prayer and piety, and callousness and a general faultiness mark their whole conduct. Thus do they gradually introduce worse features into their moral condition, and add stronger fetters to their spiritual bondage (2 St. Pet. ii. 19-22). When a wound that has healed is ruthlessly torn open again, it becomes worse than before ; when a stone lifted out of the mire falls back into it, it sinks deeper ; so is it with Christians who relapse into sin—their condition becomes more desperate. How will it be with them if, to crown their misery, God withdraws at last from them and leaves them to their fate ? ' We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed : let us forsake her . . . because her judgment hath reached even to the heavens ' (Jer. li. 9).

Devout Christian, fear to reopen the wounds in your soul caused by sin but healed by true repentance. Be faithful to your promise not to sin again and to amend your life. Keep away from the occasions of your former follies and weaknesses ; and foster in your soul a spirit of dutifulness and piety.

II. The condition of Christians who fall back into their former sins is more desperate and lamentable when one

relapse is followed by another until it may be said that to relapse into sin has become habitual with them. Will they take no serious measures to prevent this sad state of things ? Is it to continue for five years, for ten years, and even for a lifetime ? Will they never extricate themselves from their condition of sinfulness, from the sway of their passions, from the bondage of the fatal affection, and from the power of the devil ? Is it nothing to them that they are in a condition of moral degradation, that they are becoming worse instead of better, that they are hastening towards the fatal precipice where everlasting death and misery await them ? Our Lord said : ' Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin ' (St. John viii. 34). Such Christians might be the servants of God, but they prefer the base bondage of sin. Since through neglecting grace they become ever weaker and weaker, the power of sin over their will becomes greater and greater, and the hope of a sincere and lasting repentance becomes dimmer and dimmer. Behold in their conduct the folly and wickedness of relapsing into sin !

Reflect, devout Christian, upon this folly and wickedness that you may be moved to a sincere effort to correct your faults. Let no influence for evil gain any power over you to lead you to repeat what has offended God and brought harm to your soul. Pray for strength against all your spiritual enemies, that you may ever be proof against their assaults.

III. Reflect finally upon the folly of Christians in returning to their former sins, seeing that they know not if they will ever repent : they may not have the time or the grace to repent. Time is wearing on ; they are becoming worse instead of better : the time for repentance is becoming shorter ; and they are doing nothing to merit the grace of repentance. The grace must come from God, and the sinner has no merits, and no rights to the grace of repentance. St. Paul says : ' It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy ' (Rom. ix. 16). As a matter of fact, however, these Christians who relapse into sin give no evidence that they wish

to repent—the evidence is all the other way. St. Paul goes on to say : 'Therefore He hath mercy on whom He will : and whom He will, He hardeneth ' ; that is, He leaves them in their hardened condition. Sinners who have relapsed have sometimes gone so far as to despise various warnings which God has given them. Must it in the end come that God will laugh at their destruction ? (Prov. i. 26). Let Christians be persuaded that the way of relapse is the way that was trodden by those who are now cast off by God for ever ; and let such as have fallen back into ways of sin make haste to repent, and let them use effectual means to avoid relapse in the future (Ecclus. v. 8).

Devout Christian, pray for the conversion of sinners. Try by your prayers to rescue them from sin and Hell, and to restore them to the number of those who love and serve God. Beseech Mary, your heavenly Protectress, to save you by her prayers from becoming a sinner, and to obtain for you the grace to find your happiness in striving ever to please God in the path of virtue and religion.

February 10.

THE DANGER OF HUMAN RESPECT.

I. As we enter upon God's service for God's sake, and not to please the world, we must not permit the world to withdraw us from doing what that service demands. We must disregard the views and opposition of men when there is question of doing what God requires of us. One of the obstacles to piety, and even to virtue, is human respect; that is, being influenced by the sarcasm, jeers, or scorn of men who would lead us from piety, charity, and any good work, or from fulfilling the demands of duty. Sometimes sinners are deterred from conversion because they fear the ridicule of their companions. Sometimes, when a man feels that he has not been practising his religion as fully as he should, and when he therefore begins to hear Holy Mass and to receive the Sacraments more frequently, he is met with cruel remarks, and people say he wishes to be considered a devotee. If human respect weighs with him, he will discontinue his more assiduous practice of religion. In these, and in such ways, human respect exercises a baneful influence, and it should be contemned. When men misjudge us, and ridicule us, or blame us, although we are acting rightly, we must not allow their conduct in so doing to interfere with our way of acting. If even they thus cause us some pain and confusion, we should not think so much of this, as of the shame we ought rightly to experience if we were to desist in our good purposes and conduct on account of their raillery or blame.

Devout Christian, be firm and constant when there is question of duty, or of some good work, and do not allow yourself to be influenced or disturbed by what men say. You have to account for your conduct, not to men, but to God.

II. In doing what is right, and what our duty demands of us, and in seeking in all we do to work out our salvation, we should yet avoid ostentation and unnecessary singularity, so as not to invite hostile criticism. But this does not mean that we should allow human respect and any criticism to interfere with what we have mainly in view. For what sincerity, security, or stability of conduct can be looked for if we take for our guide, not the lofty principle of right, but what men will say of us? How much good is left undone, or is discontinued, and how often duty is neglected, by men who are subservient to the baneful influence of human respect! We remember how St. Peter denied his Lord, when he was in the midst of our Lord's enemies, because he feared what they might say of him; and how Pilate unjustly gave up our Lord to be crucified because the people told him that he would be no friend of Cæsar's if he spared Him. These are not isolated cases of the evil of yielding to human respect, for this evil is exceedingly common. But they are cases which show how serious may be the consequences of permitting what men may say or think of us to influence our conduct when our conscience dictates what we are bound to do. It is not by subservience to such a power that we shall consult our highest interests, or render to God a more perfect service. If we have ever yielded to its influence, has it not been because we were wanting in moral courage? And has not our subservience to it created within us a sense of shame?

Devout Christian, do what duty marks out for you, and what grace inspires you to do, in spite of what the world may say. Submit to the known will of God, and to the guidance and dictates of an enlightened conscience, and you will do what is right, and be at peace.

III. If we do what is right, and despise human respect, we shall sooner or later win for ourselves the respect of those who would interfere with us. They will admire our courage and our adhesion to right principles. This foe, human respect, will meet us everywhere in our way through life; but especially shall we meet with men's criticism when

our conduct condemns their lax conduct, or is in any way a cause of reproach to them. This will be the case when, throwing off the worldly spirit, we seek to please God by leading a more perfect life. St. Paul says that all who 'will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution' (2 Tim. iii. 12). But shall we allow ourselves to be turned aside from our good purposes by the world's criticism and opposition? Let us cling to religion, to the Church, to dutifulness, and to virtue, in spite of all such influences. Our warfare in life is to maintain this fidelity. Fidelity will finally secure the victory; for, speaking of the Last Day, the Book of Wisdom says: 'Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them' (v. 1). Woe to us, if, yielding to the insidious influence of human respect, we abandon the strait and difficult path that leads to life, to follow the broad way that leads to destruction.

Devout Christian, in spite of the world's opposition labour to persevere in doing what is right, and aim ever at pleasing God. Seek from above, and not from the world, the light and wisdom which should guide your conduct. Never be ashamed of God's service. It is the honourable service which will merit an everlasting crown in Heaven. Ask Mary, who sought God in all things, to obtain for you grace to do the same, and courage to rise superior to the unjust opposition of men.

February 11.

OUR LADY OF LOURDES.

I. The apparition of the ever-Blessed Virgin Mary to Bernadette at the grotto of Lourdes in 1858 was the beginning of a wonderful revival in devotion to our Lady, which has been accompanied by miraculous tokens of Divine bounty, especially to the sick and afflicted. The devotion and the miracles continue. Moved by his own piety, and answering the expressed wishes of many members of the Episcopate and of the faithful, the Holy Father, Pius X., has extended to the whole Church the observance, which was previously only partial, of the festival which commemorates this Apparition. In this festival we praise God for the Divine favours which He deigns to grant to Mary's prayers, and we call to mind the tenderness of Mary's maternal love. This love was shown, in the first place, to Bernadette herself; for our Lady instructed her in piety and consoled her by the sweetness she displayed towards her in the eighteen mysterious apparitions which occurred at the grotto of Lourdes. This love has afterwards been shown to the countless faithful who have visited the shrine upon our Lady's invitation, and to others in every part of the world who have made *novenas* to our Lady of Lourdes and used the water which came from the miraculous fountain at Lourdes.

Devout Christian, be filled with comfort by reason of the Divine favours which have been granted at Lourdes, and in connection with devotion to our Lady of Lourdes, and let your confidence in Mary's patronage and prayers be strengthened by these heavenly tokens of approval of devotion to her.

II. The wonders of conversion and of healing wrought at Lourdes fill us with admiration, but not with surprise;

for we know that Mary has great power with her Divine Son, and that she exercises this power in favour of those who, with becoming piety and assiduity, implore her intercession. Just as God bestows favours and graces sometimes as a reward of obedience (4 Kings v. 14), at other times in answer to the prayers of the just (Job xlii. 8 ; St. James v. 16), and again through the ministry of His priests, so does He also do this through the hands of Mary, and in response to her most acceptable prayers. Mary is, beyond all others, the most cherished of His creatures, and the purest and fairest. It is written : ' Just lips are the delight of kings : he that speaketh right things shall be loved ' (Prov. xvi. 13); how pleasing, then, to the Heavenly King is the prayer of the holiest of His creatures ! Let us praise God for the wonders He works in answer to the intercession of our Lady of Lourdes, and for the long continuance of the Divine favours. What a speaking lesson of the Divine goodness, and of Mary's regard for her devout clients, is furnished by the array of crutches seen at the grotto of Lourdes ! How often the *Te Deum* has been sung there in thanksgiving for cures manifestly wrought at that much-loved and much-frequented shrine !

Devout Christian, be consoled by the piety of the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims who every year visit that shrine, and who receive there many spiritual and temporal blessings.

III. When at length Bernadette asked the heavenly Lady her name, the ever-blessed Mary answered, with her hands joined, and with her eyes turned upwards to Heaven : ' I am the Immaculate Conception.' Mary thereby showed her love and gratitude towards God for bestowing upon her the unique and magnificent privilege of having been conceived immaculate. O Mary, ' thou art all fair, and there is not a spot in thee ' (Cant. iv. 7). This should be so, for thou art the Mother of Jesus. Let all thy clients rejoice in this most precious privilege, which is the foundation on which is erected thy surpassing holiness. God inspired Mary to give herself upon that occasion that sweet and notable appellation : ' I am the Immaculate Conception.'

Let Mary's praises be ever proclaimed at Lourdes and in every part of the Church, because of her exalted dignity, her special privileges, her goodness to men, and the place in their regard which God has marked out for her. We will not disregard her, or pass her by. We will number ourselves among her clients, we will give her due honour, we will tender her our love, and we will strive, as occasion may offer, to propagate devotion to her. Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us.

Devout Christian, place unbounded confidence in Mary, your heavenly Mother. Have recourse to her prayers in time of sickness and distress, and show your devotion upon her festival days by hearing Holy Mass and receiving Holy Communion, and by special prayers in her honour.

February 12.

'BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT.'

I. REFLECT that in the eight beatitudes our Lord has made known to us what virtues He expects in His followers. We must not be indifferent to the lessons He teaches us in them, or to the rewards promised to those who comply with those lessons. They are very different from what worldly teachers inculcate. The worldly place their happiness, not in poverty, but in riches; not in humility, but in worldly honours and distinctions; not in mourning, but in rejoicing and in vain pleasures. Our Lord tells us how we shall come to true happiness, and He leads us to the practice of the Christian virtues through the hope of heavenly blessedness and of everlasting reward. St. Augustine asks (Serm. 53) who will not run quickly and readily when he receives the assurance: Thou shalt be happy? In the first place, our Lord, the Divine Teacher of true wisdom, invites His followers to love poverty, and this, he says, must be poverty in spirit and affection; we must detach our hearts from undue love of riches: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' Blessed, then, are those Christians who, instructed by Christ Himself, keep their hearts from inordinate attachment to the wealth and good things of this world. Let us study what is meant by being poor in spirit.

Devout Christian, thank your loving Saviour for deigning to teach you what is for your welfare. Desire to learn the lessons He teaches, for every word of His is a word of wisdom to enlighten you and to guide you. Desire, then, ever to be poor in spirit, and to be content with your lot in life, and pray for the grace to be so.

II. It is recorded of some pagans how, in order to free themselves from worldly cares and to devote themselves to intellectual pursuits, they despised riches. Our object

must be something higher. Christians must be poor in spirit for God's sake, and for the sake of their own spiritual welfare now and of their heavenly reward hereafter. Whether in affluence or in want, they must, like Job, be content with God's dispensations. Three classes of persons are poor. The first are mendicants, who possess little or nothing ; the second are those who have riches but who are not attached to them, and hold them as though only in stewardship ; and the third are religious vowed to poverty, who are not personally rich and who by their vow are forbidden personally to hold or acquire riches. Christians are poor in spirit if they do not love riches, and if they are prepared to forego them should God so will. They should join humility to poverty if they would be truly and sincerely poor in spirit ; and they should pray to the Holy Spirit to bestow upon them the precious gift of these Christian virtues. There must ever be in the Church Christians who, enamoured of poverty for Christ's sake, will practise this virtue ; for Christ's spirit lives ever in His Church, and His virtues live in those who in spirit are united to Him.

Conceive, then, devout Christian, a high esteem of Christian poverty. You are not called to set your heart upon riches, but upon those things that are pleasing to your Lord and Master. Admire the example of poverty set you by Him, and imitated by so many Saints. Rejoice that in the Church the love and the practice of poverty continue, and pray that you may rightly understand in what manner and to what extent you also are called to practise it.

III. Reflect now upon the happy results of being poor in spirit. Christians who are poor in spirit are blessed because of the reward in Heaven which is promised them. They are therefore blessed now in their hope of the reward, but not in the actual possession of it ; blessed with the blessedness enjoyed on the way, but not with the enjoyment of it in their true country ; blessed with the first taste of virtue and peace, but not with the full and crowning relish of all that is good which is reserved for the kingdom to come. In this world Christians who are poor in spirit are relieved from many of the cares, labours, and anxieties

which engross the attention and worry the minds of men who pursue wealth and worldly gain in an inordinate manner ; and their minds turn more easily and willingly to what will benefit their souls. They have both time and inclination for devotion, and they escape many dangerous pitfalls to which those who love riches are exposed. It may be said that despising earthly things they are attracted towards things heavenly. Finally, the blessedness they are promised in the world to come is glorious and everlasting, and worthy of every effort and of every sacrifice. ' Blessed,' our Lord says, ' are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.'

Make secure for yourself, devout Christian, this blessedness by detaching your heart from inordinate love of riches and of earthly gains. Better, more satisfying, and more durable, are spiritual gifts. Desire to share the poverty of Jesus ; be content with your lot ; and embrace patiently and cheerfully any privations you may experience. Recommend yourself to Mary, and beseech her to obtain for you a spirit of detachment from this world's goods, and a sincere desire of such as are spiritual and heavenly.

February 13.

LOVE OF RICHES.

I. Reflect that there must usually be in riches a danger to our souls, since our Lord has said : ' Woe to you that are rich : for you have your consolation ' (St. Luke vi. 24). ' How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God ' (xviii. 24). When men seek riches inordinately, and when they are inordinately attached to those they possess, it follows that their minds are too much occupied about them. Their riches are perhaps the chief object of their care and of their pursuits. Riches in this way create an unhealthy mind ; they engross it, trouble it, and depress it. The mind is occupied with schemes and anxieties, with hopes and fears, regarding the acquisition of wealth or its preservation, and regarding gains or losses, enterprises or speculations, in the matter of this world's goods. All this produces a bad effect upon the mind, character, temper and spirit of a man. Sad to say, the worry of riches so far engrosses the mind, that those who love them neglect what is of far greater and more lasting importance—their spiritual good. In many cases they seldom think of God and of the eternal truths, and they do not find time for prayer, for approaching the Holy Sacraments, and for attending to their other spiritual duties.

Beware, devout Christian, of all attachment to the riches and good things of the world ; you will have to leave them behind you at death, and even now a change of fortune may deprive you of them. Lift up your mind rather to heavenly riches. Is it nothing to you that, through Christ, God would bestow upon you ' the abundant riches of His grace ' (Eph. ii. 7) ? These spiritual riches will elevate and ennoble your mind, and fit it for the glorious estate of your future life.

II. Reflect that riches, when inordinately loved and sought after, pervert the heart of man. So we hear our Lord, when explaining the parable of the sower, say : ' He that received the seed among thorns : is he that heareth the word, and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choketh up the word, and he becometh fruitless ' (St. Matt. xiii. 22). The love of riches turns the affections of the heart from what is holy and spiritual to what is base and profitless ; it also often makes men selfish, unjust, uncharitable, and ungenerous. The possession of riches often, moreover, makes men self-indulgent, ambitious, and proud, and is sometimes the occasion of their falling into evil ways. Therefore does St. Paul give command to St. Timothy : ' Charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded, nor to trust in the uncertainty of riches, but in the living God (who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy) ; to do good, to be rich in good works, to give easily, to communicate to others, to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the true life ' (1 Tim. vi. 17-19). Riches, when inordinately loved, not only puff up the mind and harden the heart, but they also attach men to this present life and make them worldly in display and in character.

Be not led astray, devout Christian, by this danger to your soul. Better would it be for you to be in the want of all things if in that way you would save your soul, than to be in the possession of all things if from it would result the loss of your soul. Beg of God to enlighten you with spiritual wisdom, that you may not be deluded by the allurement of riches, and that your heart may not be perverted by undue love of them or desire of them ; and place yourself dutifully in the hands of His loving providence.

III. Reflect now on the vanity of riches, inasmuch as they do not yield any true or lasting satisfaction. They are often obtained at the cost of much labour and anxiety, but they do not usually bring joy or peace. In seeking them men often make many enemies, and when they have attained them few of their friends are sincere and disinterested. Moreover they have to protect themselves against envy

and dishonesty. Reflect, too, that the time of the rich is often spent profitlessly, and that they often fail to use their worldly means with discretion and charity. Often riches are hoarded up and lie idle when they should be used to alleviate distress, or be employed in works beneficial to the neighbour or to religion. The life of the rich draws at length to a close ; their riches cannot extend it, and at death they must leave them behind. The love they have had for their riches will cause them bitterness when they have to leave them ; and what about the future if they have not, by observance of God's law and by a dutiful service of God, laid up treasure in Heaven ? Of some rich men St. James says : ' You have stored up to yourselves wrath against the last days ' (v. 3).

Thank God, devout Christian, if your heart is not drawn away from Him by the love of this world's goods. How wisely the Psalmist says : ' Better is a little to the just, than the great riches of the wicked ' (Ps. xxxvi. 16) ! Be resolved to labour for your worldly advancement with a good intention, praying ever for God's blessing, and in a spirit of conformity with His most holy will. Be resolved also to use this world's goods wisely and for a good purpose, remembering that you will have to give an account of your stewardship. Ask Mary to obtain for you by her powerful prayers a spirit of detachment from worldly riches and a sincere love of spiritual blessings.

February 14.

'BLESSED ARE THE MEEK.'

I. THE beatitudes declared by our Lord mark the sincere and interior character of the virtues demanded in His followers. If we must be poor in spirit, we must also be meek of heart. How excellent in itself and in its fruits is the virtue of meekness! It was stamped on the heart and life of our Lord. He said: 'Learn of Me, because I am meek, and humble of heart' (St. Matt. xi. 29). Genuine virtue must be a disposition of the soul; perfection has its genuineness in the interior. The meek are those who possess their souls in peace; their soul is not excited by the storms of anger or impatience, of resentment or ill-will, and they speak and act with calmness and inoffensiveness. The meek hold under control those interior disturbing elements which arouse and inflame the mind, and they suppress all murmuring at the misfortunes or sufferings which God permits to befall them. They are humble under the mighty hand of God (1 St. Pet. v. 6). How religious and meritorious is the discipline of this self-control! From how many fatal mistakes in conduct it preserves the meek! And what a help to devotion and to peace it proves to them!

Become, then, devout Christian, a zealous pupil in the school of the Divine Master, and strive by the help of His tuition and example to learn this admirable lesson concerning meekness which He would teach you. Praise and love the meekness of the Sacred Heart manifested at every stage of your Saviour's life; and pray earnestly for the grace to control all disturbing feelings that would lead you to offend God, and strive ever to bear with Christian meekness and patience the ills of this present life.

II. Reflect that the meek so conduct themselves as to

ensure, as far as they can, living in peace with their neighbour. Aided by grace, they suppress indignation when they meet with contradictions, with opposition, or with unjust or unkind treatment from others. Adversity tries all men, but the meek bear it with resignation, being convinced that God arranges all things in wisdom and for His own glory. They, moreover, deem themselves deserving of even more severe afflictions than those that befall them. If we study the character and conduct of the truly meek, we shall remark how they are approachable by all, and affable towards everybody; we shall see that they even check the anger of others by their mild replies or gentle rebukes, while on their own part they bear patiently with the anger of others, and with the injuries they endure from others; and we shall also notice that they not only stay the anger of others, but even win them over by their placid and gentle manner. How beautiful then must be the soul of the meek!

Conceive therefore, devout Christian, a sincere admiration of this exalted virtue of meekness; and lament your own shortcomings in regard of the practice of it. Let not the uprising of anger or impatience carry you away, but keep these feelings under restraint. The disturbances which are opposed to meekness tend to ruffle peace of mind, and they bring you no lasting satisfaction; but meekness of heart and conduct will give you a comforting victory over yourself, and will overcome the wrath of your neighbour.

III. Reflect more particularly upon the happy fruits of meekness. The meek are pleasing to God and to men. The Psalmist says: 'The Lord is sweet and righteous. . . . He will guide the mild in judgment, He will teach the meek His ways' (Ps. xxiv. 8, 9). God rewards the meek with interior peace. Our Lord tells them: 'You shall find rest to your souls' (St. Matt. xi. 29). They have the dispositions fitting them to acquire heavenly wisdom and spiritual treasures. The voice of the Holy Spirit is not heard where there is disturbance, but where there is tranquillity, as in the souls of the meek. Our Lord says: 'Blessed are the

meek : for they shall possess the land.' In this world they possess their own souls in peace, whereas the passionate are carried out of themselves ; and in the world to come the meek shall possess the land of the Blessed—they shall come into possession of the heavenly inheritance. Their fellow-men respect them, and restrain themselves in their presence ; and their admirable example promotes charity and peace.

Be desirous, then, devout Christian, of these holy fruits and rewards, and seek to secure them for yourself by loving meekness and by practising it. Be not querulous, impatient, or bad-tempered ; and be careful not to give play to your tongue while you are under the influence of interior disturbance. Love the ways of peace. Say often : ' Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thy Heart.' Throw yourself confidently on Mary's intercession, beseeching her to obtain for you a sincere love of meekness that your heart may be better disposed for heavenly gifts, and may relish the blessings of a holy peace.

February 15.

ANGER.

I. Among the disturbing and ruinous influences with which the soul has to contend is anger. Even a just indignation must be controlled and be restrained within reasonable bounds, but anger must be fully suppressed. Like other vices, anger disturbs the correct balance of man's reason, and leads him to conduct which, in his calm moments, he will regret. It rises as a dense vapour to obscure the mind, hiding from it the accurate vision of the circumstances that give rise to it, and impressing it at the same time with exaggerated or even entirely false notions of those circumstances. The judgment being thus deluded and led astray, the angry man will not listen to reason ; others may try to persuade him, but all in vain. Nor will he weigh the consequences of his giving way to his anger—consequences that may be injurious, painful, and serious to himself as well as to those with whom he is angry. At the same time, what is of greater account, he allows himself to be carried away by his passion to the offence of God, and to the serious injury of his own soul. While his own mind is darkened and deluded, the wickedness and unreasonableness of his conduct is clearly discerned by others.

Be on your guard, devout Christian, against the uprising of anger. Take time to weigh what conduct will be most in conformity with the dictates of right reason, and of religion. Remember that Satan, with his delusions and snares, seeks to entrap the souls of God's servants by fomenting their passions. Love the ways of charity, meekness, and peace. Detest now all your sins of anger in the past, and be resolved quickly to curb every angry movement of your soul, lest you be led into any regrettable conduct.

II. Reflect upon the undesirable impression which anger makes upon a man's feelings. Being carried away by passion, the angry man begins at once to entertain unkind feelings for his neighbour, and to forget the duties imposed upon himself by the law of Christian charity. The contentious spirit resulting from his anger causes him to regard his neighbour in the light of an enemy ; so he turns against him, and wishes to have nothing to do with him. Even if he does not go to these lengths, he yet regards him unfavourably, attributes wrong motives to him, and speaks against him. There is often, in addition to this, a wish to do the neighbour more or less harm, and a secret satisfaction if any misfortune befalls him. All this manifests how anger has perverted his feelings, and it is to be feared that, if the anger be not checked, they may be even further perverted. If he has misjudged his neighbour's action, his conduct towards him will be wanting not only in charity but also in justice. Will he not add sin to sin ? St. James says : ' The anger of man worketh not the justice of God.'

Dread, then, devout Christian, the violent sway of this passion of anger ; let it not get possession of you. It will warp your judgment and embitter your feelings. It will bring more evils upon yourself than upon your neighbour. Look devoutly and admiringly upon the meekness of your loving Saviour, who when He was reviled did not revile, but bore untold injuries from His own creatures with unalterable patience ; and pray for a spirit of meekness.

III. Reflect how unbecoming and disedifying are the results of anger when it bursts. To angry words are often added invective, false accusations, embittered speeches, and vehement provocations ; and under the excitement of passion the holy Name of God may be profaned. In many cases personal injury is attempted, and property is in a most senseless way destroyed. Sometimes in a violent fit of anger a man acts like one insane. Anger has often led to acts of injustice, to disunion in families, to the severance of friendship, to serious and prolonged misunderstandings, and even to murder and self-destruction. Anger, then, not only destroys peace and happiness, but it also leads to

many other disastrous consequences. The holy writer says : ' Anger and fury are both of them abominable ' (Ecclus. xxvii. 33). Anger creates a disturbance which it takes long to still, and a wound which it takes long to heal. How many estrangements caused by anger continue for years ! St. John Climacus says : ' The Lord rests in the hearts of the meek, but a turbulent soul is the nest of the devil.'

Put away from you, devout Christian, whatever might lead you to this passion of anger ; and guard yourself against it when others, by their words or conduct, would give you provocation. Run in spirit to the most meek Heart of your Saviour as to a secure refuge from the enemy. Love to study the lessons of your Saviour's meekness, and ever dread the serious consequences of anger. Commend yourself to Mary, ever meek and gentle, and beg her intercession for you, that you may ever walk in the paths of virtue and of peace.

February 16.

'BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN.'

I. THERE is a sorrow that is pleasing to God and profitable to ourselves. It is the sorrow of Christian mourners who are detached from the world, who live conformably with the holy will of God, who grieve that God should be offended, and who fervently long for God. This spirit of sorrow carries Christians forward on the way to perfection. There is, first, the mourning of the truly penitent, of the compunctionate of heart. So pleasing to God is this kind of mourning that it is regarded as a sacrifice. David says: 'A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit' (Ps. l. 19); and our Lord said: 'There shall be joy before the Angels of God upon one sinner doing penance' (St. Luke xv. 10). Of this kind of mourning St. Paul declares the exceeding value where he says: 'The sorrow that is according to God worketh penance steadfast unto salvation' (2 Cor. vii. 10). When, therefore, Christians bewail sin, whether their own sins or those of others, they mourn in a meritorious way that will bring upon themselves a rich blessing. They give evident proof of their love of God, and of their desire that He should be dutifully loved and served.

Pray, then, devout Christian, to the Holy Spirit to touch your heart with this kind of sorrow, that it may tend to the healing of your soul's spiritual disorders, and inspire you with a horror of offending the God of all goodness. Be not like those unfeeling Christians who sin without remorse, and who repeat their sin as occasion offers. What lamentable perversity there is in such conduct! Let a holy compunction move your heart to bewail your falls, and to strive sincerely and perseveringly to amend what is faulty.

II. Another kind of mourning is that which arises from the pressure of trials and afflictions, even though they are

borne with Christian patience. These trials and afflictions weigh upon the soul, and cause it to mourn—not, indeed, with murmuring and repining, but only with a sense of being under trial or chastisement. Under such a sense as this David mourned, when he said : ' Lord, all my desire is before Thee, and my groaning is not hidden from Thee (Ps. xxxvii. 10). The trials of the just should be to them a token of God's love, and their mourning under affliction should be accompanied by a spirit of perfect resignation to God's holy will ; for Solomon says : ' Reject not the correction of the Lord : and do not faint when thou art chastised by Him : for whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth ' (Prov. iii. 11, 12). Have not the Saints in every age been subject to many crosses and contradictions during their sojourn in this ' vale of tears ' ? A third kind of mourning is that of the Christian exile, who longs for the vision of God, and for the repose and happiness of his Father's home. This was the mourning of St. Paul when he said : ' We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God ' (Rom. viii. 23) ; ' Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?' (vii. 24).

Mourn, devout Christian, your absence from your heavenly and everlasting home. You feel the trial of the present perpetual contest with your spiritual enemies, you are alarmed lest you should offend God, you are anxious about the future, and you bear the burden of various cares. Let not all this cause you any mistrust in the wisdom or goodness of God's appointments, or lessen your hope of fulfilling your high destiny. Lift up your soul to God with heavenly desires, and let your mourning be in a spirit of holy resignation.

III. Our Lord said : ' Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted.' Christians do not mourn without experiencing comfort. If they bewail their sins with heartfelt sorrow and with a sincere detestation of them, they shall be comforted by a sense of God's forgiveness and by the assurance of it which is given in the Holy Sacrament of penance ; and hereafter they will receive the heavenly

reward equally with St. Peter, St. Mary Magdalen, and all true penitents. Christians who mourn under present afflictions shall be supported by God's grace, and shall be accorded a measure of spiritual consolations; and their temporary sorrow shall hereafter be changed to everlasting joy. Finally, Christians who mourn as exiles shall be consoled with the comforting hope and confidence of attaining in God's good time the heavenly home of their longings, and this will keep their hearts from inordinate desires of the empty vanities and unreal satisfactions offered by the world, and from all the ways of evil, while they await patiently the realization of the Divine promises.

Learn, then, devout Christian, from these reflections, the benefit of that mourning which our Lord declares to be 'blessed.' Admire the wisdom of the Saints and of all God's servants who have so mourned as to merit heavenly consolations. Their mourning was a sign of their interior and solid virtue, and of their sincere devotedness to God's service, and of their desire of union with Him. Seek your consolation, not in the dissipating pleasures of the world, but in doing what is according to the good pleasure of God. Pray to Mary to obtain for you comfort under the trials of life and a more sincere desire of heavenly blessings.

February 7.

THE PLEASURES OF THE WORLD.

I. While, in view of the heavenly reward, devout Christians mourn as our Lord would have His followers mourn, the worldly and the indevout seek in various ways their satisfaction in the pleasures of life. We do not now allude to the miserable and lamentable conduct of those who become victims of intemperance or voluptuousness in any degree, but to the inordinate attachment to this world's ambitions, pleasures, fashions, and frivolities which is an obstacle to grace, and an allurement from the ways of Christian piety. The pleasures of the world are a danger and a snare to Christians: they should therefore be sought with wise moderation and with due caution. They are in themselves for the most part vain; but they engross the attention of their votaries, so as to take away their thoughts from more serious duties. Inordinate love of the passing and frivolous pleasures of life leads Christians to a neglect of the duties of their state, to the omission of the duties of piety and religion, and, in general, to carelessness and indifference about spiritual things, and about any serious preparation for the future life. From all this follows a loss of time and other regrettable consequences; and furthermore, wrong ideas are created about what is of real importance in life; the temporal is preferred to the eternal, and the earthly to the heavenly.

Beware, devout Christian, of any dangerous attachment to worldly pleasures, and of the mist of falsity with which it would obscure heavenly truths and the real issue of life. Sanctify your moderate and discreet use of such pleasures by seeking them with a pure intention; thus will you protect yourself from delusion as to their benefit, and from any snare they might be to your soul.

II. Although worldly pleasures are often in themselves only vain or frivolous, there are yet some which are absolutely dangerous, and these should be avoided by all Christians. Even such as are merely vain present an element of danger, since they tend to attach man's heart to passing distractions, earthly enjoyments, and excessive mirth. Although these things cannot satisfy his heart, they become an attraction and are loved. Then is God loved less, and spiritual blessings are viewed with a distorted vision which causes them to be undervalued, if not even disregarded. The inordinate love of worldly pleasures carries everything with it, and impresses itself upon the heart and character of its victims, so as to destroy in part the true spirit of a follower of Christ. It often causes a serious loss of Christian piety, meekness, humility, and self-denial, which are the very foundation of a Christian life. Under these circumstances what should be a mere pastime and recreation becomes the engrossing object of pursuit; and consequently the serious ends of life are scarcely thought of.

Beware, devout Christian, of this danger. It may lead to even more fatal consequences than those which we have been considering. The path of worldly pleasure is a downward one. Beware of spending extravagantly upon unnecessary amusements and upon light literature time and money that should be devoted to better purposes. Moderate your love of gaiety and relaxation, so as not to allow it to turn your thoughts from religion and duty. And pray for the grace not to be attached to the vanities of the world, but ever to love what is wise, and good, and pleasing to God.

III. Reflect that the inordinate pursuit of worldly pleasures is not only attended with danger to the spiritual well-being of Christians, but it is also often profitless; at least there remains no lasting gain. These pleasures bring men no nearer to Heaven—perhaps they carry them farther away from it; and they do not afford any durable gratification, but perhaps create a fresh appetite for other pleasures equally profitless, if not also more dangerous.

When the pleasure is past, is it not often felt that precious time has been wasted, and that expense has been uselessly incurred? Experience also shows that these unprofitable pleasures cause dissipation of mind and a disrelish for piety and for the important duties of religion. Christians should heed the exhortation of St. John when he says: 'Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. . . . The world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof. But he that doth the will of God abideth for ever' (1 St. John ii. 15, 17).

Pray, devout Christian, that you may be wisely guided in the pursuit and use of worldly pleasures, so that you may not suffer present spiritual loss, or endanger your everlasting welfare. It would be better to deny yourself these passing joys than for their sake to deprive yourself of everlasting blessings. While allowing yourself suitable and profitable relaxation, let your heart be ever fixed upon doing the will of God, with a firm determination of carefully avoiding whatever might offend Him. Beseech Mary to protect you from the dangers of the world, and to obtain for you a constant zeal for your sanctification.

February 18.

'BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER JUSTICE.'

I. Our Lord would not have His followers indifferent about what is termed justice, and all that comes under the name of justice. Not only must they not be wicked or neglectful of the duties of a good life, they must sincerely and constantly hunger and thirst after justice. The justice He demands must be goodness in spirit and in conduct—in thought, desire, affection, speech, and action. Our Lord would have the lives of His followers to be an example and a reproach to unbelievers. Many of the Saints in the pursuit of perfection voluntarily imposed upon themselves many privations, often suffering even hunger and thirst; but the hunger and thirst of which our Lord speaks is the determined effort and the zeal which the truly just display in their endeavour to 'fulfil all justice' (St. Matt. iii. 15). Christians are invited and exhorted, by the aid of grace, to be constant and exact in observing all that is demanded by God's commandments, in fulfilling all the duties of religion, and in practising the Christian virtues. It must be their desire ever to please God, and carefully to abstain from what might lead them to sin of any kind.

Be resolved, devout Christian, not to turn aside to the right or to the left from the path of true goodness. So walk by the path of a holy discipline that you may avoid every fall into sin yourself, and that you may not cause others to offend God in any way. Love the ways of piety and virtue, and pray that you may ever seek your happiness in striving to please God, and that you may abhor all the ways of evil.

II. Christians are exhorted in every possible way within

the scope of their calling in life to practise themselves, and to promote in others, what is demanded by the service of God: in this way should they hunger and thirst after justice. The holy desire of their own perfection should carry them onward in the pursuit of the Christian virtues and in the practice of religiousness, not only and not always in a manner that might cause men to esteem and honour them, but also at times in ways that are arduous and trying to nature, and even in ways that might lead men to look down upon them with unmerited contempt. Christians in their zeal for goodness must not allow themselves to be deterred or turned aside by any fear of men's disesteem; and they are warned not to do their justice before man to be seen by them (St. Matt. vi. 1). They must, in spite of all obstacles, ever persevere in the path of a truly Christian life, persuaded that there is always much more that they can do to become pleasing to God. They should therefore ever press forward on this path with a holy eagerness, so that it may be said of them that they even hunger and thirst after justice.

See, then, devout Christian, what is demanded of your zeal for all goodness. Be not dismayed by the opposition you may experience from the slothfulness or unruliness of your own nature, or from the ill-will of others; but seek to be ever more pleasing to the Sacred Heart of Jesus who invites you to learn of Him and to follow Him.

III. Our Lord says: 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.' While the wicked are left empty-handed, or strive to feed their souls with the husks of swine, the just who are eager for justice are rewarded with ample blessings. The lovers of justice who hate iniquity shall be anointed with the oil of gladness (Ps. xliv. 8), and they shall have their hands filled with spiritual gifts; they will advance in holiness and merit, and it will be given them to experience a sense of satisfaction and of consolation, which is not granted to the lukewarm and indifferent. Our blessed Lady declared in her canticle: 'He hath filled the hungry with good things.' If this is true of the ways of God's bounty in

dealing with His true servants in this life, how much more so is it true of the outpouring of His goodness upon them in the life to come! The Psalmist says: 'They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house: and Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure' (Ps. xxxv. 9).

Desire for yourself, devout Christian, the fulness of spiritual joy and contentment in this life, and of the everlasting joys of Heaven hereafter; and that you may receive these promised blessings, pursue ever with zeal and constancy the paths of justice. Be not deceived or led astray by bad example or by delusive advice. Demand through Mary's prayers a zeal for your perfection, and a constant determination to walk in the ways of virtue and of a devout life.

February 19.

THE NEGLECT OF SPIRITUAL THINGS.

I. Reflect upon the neglect of spiritual knowledge, and the want of spiritual effort, which are met with even among Christians, that you may recognize how much good the soul is deprived of in consequence of such neglect. Many Christians, instead of hungering and thirsting after justice, pursue with zest the passing gains of this present life. They neglect that holy and necessary instruction which should be their guide in the path of God's service, which should steady their steps amidst the perils of their present existence, and which would point clearly out to them the conditions of salvation. Failing in spiritual knowledge, they fail also in making spiritual effort; for they neglect to avail themselves of the means divinely provided to enable them to secure their everlasting salvation, and to assist their souls' advancement in virtue and holiness. When this spiritual knowledge and spiritual effort are wanting, it follows that spiritual blessings are undervalued; and there is a neglect of prayer, of hearing the word of God, of practising devotion, and of receiving the holy Sacraments.

Thank God, devout Christian, for the consoling and abundant provision which He has so lovingly made for your spiritual welfare, and be resolved not to disregard the bounties of His providence. Be determined, with the help of His grace, ever to set higher value upon what concerns your spiritual and everlasting well-being, than upon the passing joys and conveniences of life; and pray that you may ever love Jesus Christ and His holy Cross rather than the world and its empty vanities.

II. Reflect upon the loss the soul suffers in consequence of the neglect of spiritual things. It becomes weak and

worldly. While the devout become firm in the ways of virtue and generous in God's service, like healthy branches of a beautiful vine, the negligent fall away in vigour and fruitfulness like the sickly branches that the vine-dresser is prepared to cut off. Christians who neglect spiritual things are less resolute as to good, and more liable to fall into sin, than others who lead a devout life ; their mind is often filled with frivolous thoughts, their affections are easily carried away by inordinate attachments, their conversation turns usually upon worldly and useless topics, and they make much of worldly prosperity, position, fashion, and passing pleasures. Such things do not satisfy the soul ; they are a drawback to its religious progress ; and they tend to divert it from that earnest seeking for God which is a sign of grace and a token of predestination. God addresses the souls of His children in the words of Holy Writ, saying : 'Hear Me, ye divine offspring, and bud forth as the rose planted by the brooks of waters. Give ye a sweet odour as frankincense. Send forth flowers as the lily' (Ecclus. xxxix. 17-19) ; but where, in the case of the worldly-minded, are the flowers and fruits and perfumes of true holiness ?

Turn, then, devout Christian, your thoughts and affections to God with earnest devotion ; and wisely set your heart upon what will promote your spiritual welfare ; that you may, by God's grace, prove yourself strong in the hour of conflict, and loyal in God's service. In this way will you win for yourself now the comfort of God's blessing, and lay up for yourself treasures in Heaven.

III. The neglect of spiritual things is the cause of the loss of spiritual blessings ; for while Christians unwisely and inordinately pursue temporal gains and satisfactions, they often at the same time neglect to harvest for themselves fruits that will be everlasting. Our Lord says : 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting' (St. John vi. 27). What place, indeed, in the life of the neglectful have works of piety, of charity, and of self-denial ? Yet it is such works as these that make the lives of Christians pleasing

to God, and edifying to the neighbour ; and these are the works that have their fruit in the heavenly and everlasting rewards (Rom. vi. 22). Would that all Christians faithfully obeyed our Lord's command : ' Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His justice ' (St. Matt. vi. 33), then would they seek spiritual blessings with earnestness and constancy, and pursue temporal satisfactions with discretion and with a well-ordered intention.

Be thankful, devout Christian, for the temporal blessings which God has bestowed upon you ; use them wisely, and be content with the arrangements of His providence ; but let not your worldly cares, or any eagerness for earthly joys, comforts, or distinctions, cause you to neglect your spiritual welfare. Nourish the mind with spiritual instruction by pious reflections, meditation, and useful reading ; and seek to strengthen the soul, and to nourish piety, by prayer, by assisting at the services of the Church, and by frequenting the Holy Sacraments. Take part, according to your opportunities, in works of charity and in promoting the good of religion. Learn of Mary to love spiritual things, and beg through her intercession that grace may ever draw you and lead you in the ways that are most pleasing to God.

February 20.

'BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL.'

I. Our faith forbids us to form any conception of God that excludes His infinite mercy. His mercy attracts us most powerfully to Him. Our Lord wishes His followers to learn lessons from the ways of God, and He says to them: 'Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful' (St. Luke vi. 36). The Holy Scriptures attest throughout them God's unspeakable mercy. Mercifulness enters largely into the character of the perfect Christian. He is charitable and compassionate, a stranger to vindictiveness, and always ready to forgive when he has been injured or offended. How admirable is this disposition! Then his actions and usual conduct correspond with this forgiving, compassionate, and charitable disposition; and they are motived, not by any desire to appear magnanimous, or to obtain the esteem and praise of men, but by a sincere desire of pleasing God. The true Christian is merciful for God's sake when he has been offended: he does not make reconciliation with himself difficult and all but impossible; for, on the contrary, his humility and charity lead him to use every reasonable means of bringing about this reconciliation, and it is finally effected without his manifesting any bitterness or censoriousness. Moreover, he forgives with the same dispositions and with the same gentleness of manner again and again, according to our Lord's precept (St. Matt. xviii. 22).

Devout Christian, if you would be pleasing to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, seek to have these admirable dispositions, and to display them as often as occasion occurs. Learn of that Divine Heart a sincere spirit of forgiveness. Let it be your constant endeavour to live in peace and charity with every neighbour, and let no obstacle be put on your

part to reconciliation when any variance with your neighbour arises.

II. Mercifulness is also shown in the practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. The merciful Christian will give alms to the needy, and will in other ways assist his neighbour in his temporal necessities. He will even seek out the bashful poor who bear their distress silently and secretly; and he will relieve it with discretion and consideration, so as not to cause pain. The merciful Christian will also, according to his circumstances, promote or assist works that have for object the relief of the indigent. He will in various ways take part in the spiritual works of mercy, by instruction or advice, but especially by prayer; having principally in view in all these works his neighbour's conversion, sanctification, and salvation. He will recognize that these spiritual works of mercy are of a higher and more meritorious order than the corporal works of mercy, and this will stimulate his zeal in practising them. The merciful Christian will go in search of those timid sinners who hold back until they are taken gently by the hand and led to the tribunal of penance. He will not in all these works consider his own convenience or profit, but will be happy at some cost to himself to serve our Lord in the person of his needy neighbour. 'Blessed are the merciful.'

Pray, devout Christian, for a spirit of charity and compassion, that as occasion arises you may perform the various works of mercy. Neighbours are ever at hand who need spiritual or temporal help or consolation. Render your help kindly, unobtrusively, and considerately. Seek especially your neighbour's spiritual good, promoting this by prayers for the conversion of sinners, of heretics, and of unbelievers, for the comfort and relief of the distressed and tempted, and for the perseverance of the just.

III. Our Lord says: 'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.' These words convey to our mind a most consoling promise, for who does not need mercy, and who does not desire it? David prayed: 'Oh, let Thy mercy be for my comfort.... Let Thy tender

mercies come unto me' (Ps. cxviii. 76, 77). What lot would be ours if God were to deny us His mercy? Our Lord assures us that if we show mercy, mercy will be shown to us; we shall receive the grace of repentance and compunction, we shall be pardoned in this life, and we shall find mercy at the judgment-seat of God in the life to come. At that dread judgment-seat we shall learn that when we performed the works of mercy in behalf of our needy neighbour, we did it even to our Lord Himself (St. Matt. xxv. 40). How blessed, then, are Christians who have the spirit of Christian mercifulness! Their charity covers the multitude of their sins. Let Christians never weary of forgiving injuries and of showing mercy, and God will not weary of extending to them His merciful forgiveness.

As, devout Christian, you earnestly desire to experience a continuance of God's mercies, strive ever to cultivate a spirit of Christian mercifulness. You wish for yourself, in your various needs, the sympathy, consideration, and assistance of others, extend these proofs of charity and mercifulness to your neighbour as occasion arises. You wish from God a ready and full pardon of all your sins, extend a similar forgiveness from your heart to any who offend you. Thus will you merit for yourself the consoling bounties of the Divine mercy. Pray to Mary, the 'Virgin most merciful,' to obtain for you the grace of a forgiving spirit, and of an habitual compunction of heart, that you may be ever disposed for God's merciful forgiveness.

February 21.

VINDICTIVENESS.

I. We may raise our hand against our neighbour in self-defence, but not to revenge ourselves. It was never intended that our heart created to love should be embittered and desecrated by revengeful feelings. Christians who yield to vindictive feelings fall away from charity, and from what is noble and generous in conduct. They seek to excuse themselves by saying that they have been treated by their neighbour with injustice, scorn, incivility, or unkindness. Let it be allowed that this is so, although often the treatment complained of has not been intentional; but what gain will their own vindictiveness bring them? Will it not widen the breach of charity? Will it not cause further estrangement? Will it not set against themselves others who are pained by their vindictive conduct? And will it not cause in their own feelings a reactionary sense of disgust with themselves? How different matters would be if only they had followed the dictates of charity instead of those of anger, revenge, and self-love!

Learn, devout Christian, what your conduct should be when you have been injured by your neighbour. Learn it from the meekness of the Sacred Heart; learn it from the teaching and conduct of Jesus Christ. Our Lord's instruction is chiefly contained in these words: 'Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you' (St. Matt. v. 44). What is hard to nature will become easy by the help of Divine grace. Let not the generous and charitable feelings of your heart give place to the base desire of revenge. Love the ways of peace.

II. St. Paul says: 'To no man rendering evil for evil... Not revenging yourselves . . . but give place unto wrath, for

it is written: Revenge to Me; I will repay, saith the Lord' (Rom. xii. 17, 19). The Apostle teaches the same lesson as that delivered by the Divine Master. Revenge must have no place in Christian conduct. Let the revengeful remember how the person who is the object of their revenge is related to God and to themselves: he is the creature of God and His adopted child, while he is also their own brother, a member of the spiritual family of Christ. Will, then, God permit him to be injured with impunity? Will Christ allow cruel dissensions and vindictiveness in His spiritual household? Christians who would avenge injuries must look beyond the object of their vengeance; they will see that their action not only infringes God's law, but that it is also an encroachment on the Divine rights; it leads them to punish one who by many titles belongs to God. God who is over all will do justice to all, and it is not for us to take the law into our own hands. The Christian law of charity requires that we should not even desire revenge; much less should we seek it.

Watch over your feelings, devout Christian, when they clamour for satisfaction against your neighbour; seek through prayer grace to control and correct them. No satisfaction your revenge might obtain for you could compensate you for the loss of charity and of God's love; your revenge will bring greater evils upon yourself than upon him who is the object of it. Turn, then, your heart from all vindictiveness.

III. Experience teaches that vindictiveness causes a wound in the soul of the revengeful which it takes a long time to heal. Revenge at times so far takes possession of the soul as to lead it to hazard everything for its sake. To satisfy it men are willing to spend their worldly means and to suffer temporal losses, and, what is sadder, to deprive themselves of spiritual and everlasting blessings. When they are thus carried away, they comfort themselves by the erroneous thought that revenge is sweet. Passion blinds them. How fatal this blindness may prove! Their wickedness keeps them from the Holy Sacraments, and hinders them from using the remedies which would cure

the disease. These deluded Christians in the meantime pride themselves that they are rightly actuated by a laudable spirit of justice and self-respect; and they close their mind to the dictates of the Divine Wisdom, to the lessons imparted by their loving Saviour, to the teachings of the lives of the Saints, and to the advice of their priests and of other prudent counsellors. What, then, will save them?

Let not, devout Christian, this fatal passion of revenge find place in your heart. Better would it be to suffer temporal loss, or to endure the disesteem of men, than by revenge to drive grace from your soul, and peace from your mind and heart. Learn from Jesus Christ to pray for all your enemies, saying: 'Father, forgive them.' Learn from the tender and merciful heart of Mary to love all mankind, and beseech this most clement mother to obtain for you patience under wrongs and a ready spirit of forgiveness.

February 22.

'BLESSED ARE THE CLEAN OF HEART.'

I. When we study the meaning of the eight beatitudes, we see how our Lord would lead His followers step by step in the way of perfection; all the while drawing them nearer and nearer to Himself, in Whom they shall find their ultimate and everlasting happiness. The various means by which He would thus draw His followers to Himself, are of themselves such as sanctify, comfort, and give joy to the soul, while they raise it above the disorder and unseemliness of what is unholy. To be clean of heart, Christians must, in the first place, correct the disorder of concupiscence. Preferring the service of the spirit to that of the flesh, they must drive from their mind all unchaste and dangerous thoughts and imaginations, and keep their heart from entertaining irregular desires; and they must at the same time for God's sake and for its own sake, love the delicate and holy virtue of purity. In order to preserve purity of mind and heart, sincere Christians will guard themselves strictly against all dangers from without, they will carefully shun all undue familiarities and inordinate attachments, they will keep a watch over their thoughts and senses, they will avoid self-indulgence, they will pray, and they will frequent the Holy Sacraments. God will reward their efforts and their struggles; He will sustain them under temptation, and He will give them a pure heart.

Devout Christian, cultivate with a holy and constant affection this bright, healthy, and delicate virtue of purity. You will not be the cherished child of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of spotless Mary without it. Beware, then, of all snares, delusions, dangers, and temptations, that might cause any lessening of purity in mind or heart.

II. To be clean of heart, Christians must, in the second place, keep their conscience free from the guilt of sin, and their heart from attachment to any kind of sin. There is such attachment when they do not hate sin, and do not seriously endeavour to avoid it. The clean of heart strive to avoid what is wilfully wrong, whether by thought, affection, word, act, neglect, or omission; their upright soul follows the guidance of duty; they are virtuous and righteous in their intentions as well as in their conduct; they check the proneness and the irregularities of their passions; and they, moreover, love what is good, and practise piety. It follows from all this that their actions and their conduct manifest the simplicity and purity of their heart; and their heart is the good ground that will yield fruit a hundredfold. There are also, in the third place, Christians who tread a higher way of perfection. Their heart is so far detached from all attachment to created things, that they may be said to love God alone; it is raised above every earthly affection, and is centred in God with the purest affection and attraction. They enjoy, as it were, a nearer sight of God, and relish Divine things more purely and sweetly than less perfect Christians; therefore are they more worthy than others to be called 'clean of heart.'

Desire, devout Christian, to disengage your heart from everything that might render it displeasing to God. Bewail that weakness and that fickleness which cause you so easily to fall into lesser sins; and seek by frequent acts of sincere contrition, by repeated acts of the love of God, and by frequenting the Holy Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, to cleanse your soul from all sin, and to attach it more firmly to virtue and piety.

III. Our Lord said: 'Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.' The clean of heart are the friends of God; and David says that the 'innocent in hands and clean of heart' shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord (Ps. xxiii. 4). For such as these religion has an attraction, and they love the ways of duty and piety. This is not the case with the carnal man, with the sinner, with one who

is carried away by passion or by the inordinate love of creatures ; for such as these have their vision obscured, and they do not see God now : if they do not repent and seek to be clean of heart, they will never see Him. Such as these love the darkness rather than the light ; they shut out the light of God's teaching, and resist the gentle and holy influence of His grace. The clean of heart, on the other hand, are comforted by the presence of God in their soul ; they love the light of His holy teaching and inspirations ; and they receive heavenly guidance in their doubts and temptations. However clearly they may see God in this life, it will only be as in a mirror and in a dark manner, in comparison with the everlasting vision of Him in the life to come, for then they shall see Him face to face (1 Cor. xiii. 12).

This, devout Christian, is the happy vision for which you long. The way to secure it for yourself is to aim ever at purity of heart and conscience. Turn away from every shadow of evil. Ever remember the Divine claims to your faithful love and service. Delight in all that is good. Place yourself with loving devotion under the protection of Mary Immaculate, and beseech her to obtain for you a sincere hatred of every kind of sin, and a constant practical love of purity and innocence.

February 23.

WORKS OF DARKNESS.

I. All Christians are bound to avoid those evil works that render them unworthy of their Heavenly Father and of the kingdom of His Saints. Among these works of sin are the wicked thoughts, desires, conversations, and deeds which are opposed to Christian purity and chastity. Rightly may they be called works of darkness, because through very shame those who are guilty of them seek to conceal them as far as may be possible; because they are often caused and instigated by the reprobate Spirit of darkness; and because they lead unwary souls to the kingdom of everlasting darkness. Such sins, moreover, bring into the soul a spiritual darkness that obscures the holiness of God's law, and the beauty of virtue. The soul falls at first under a base attraction towards what is dangerous to Christian delicacy and purity, and afterwards under the fatal influence of a complacency, or of a desire, which, if wilfully entertained, may be grievously sinful. Impressions are thus made upon the soul which are hardly ever removed, and which render it more liable to a repetition of the sin, and even dispose it to fall more grievously.

Beware, devout Christian, of exposing yourself to any molestation of your pure mind and heart which might arise, from indelicate imaginations or curiosity, from indiscretions, or from not observing a prudent reserve. Check at once whatever might make a dangerous impression upon your mind; and by fervent prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus beg the Divine protection against every kind of evil assault that might be prejudicial to the most delicate purity.

II. It is the duty of Christians to strive ever to extinguish the fires of sinful concupiscence; but, alas, through

delusion or perversity, they are found often to feed those fatal fires. By every concession to the enemy, by every fresh act of complacency, by every additional exposal of themselves to danger, by every wilful return to the occasion of sin, they add fuel to those ever-exacting fires, thus giving them greater force and extension. Their conduct is directly in conflict with the virtue demanded by Jesus Christ in His followers ; for by them every kind of impurity should be held in such abhorrence that it should not even be named by them. St. Paul therefore says : 'Let it not so much as be named among you as becometh saints' (Eph. v. 3). Guided by true Christian feeling, and desirous of preserving purity of mind and heart, Christians should avoid dangerous readings and conversations, unguarded glances, irregular attachments, and undue familiarity ; and while careful of self-respect, they should check any want of becomingness and any forgetfulness of prudent decorum towards themselves on the part of others.

Devout Christian, let your exterior behaviour be ever correct in all that is demanded by Christian becomingness. That you may escape the dangers to virtue that lie around you, ever 'watch and pray.' Such is the command of your loving Saviour. Love with sincere affection Christian purity and all that it demands, and seek to strengthen this affection by practices of piety.

III. Christians should ever fear the dangerous power of sinful concupiscence ; they should remember that if they yield to it, it will make them its slaves. They should bear in mind its fatal consequences in this life and in the next. In this life it tends to weaken faith and to destroy devotion, it lessens the love of virtue and of duty, and it defiles and vitiates the heart, withdrawing it further and further from God and from spiritual things. It leads to eternal punishment in the next life ; for speaking of impurities and other grievous sins, St. Paul says : 'They who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God' (Gal. v. 21). Alas, that men, for a base and passing gratification, barter their heavenly inheritance ! How wretched and inglorious shall be their everlasting lot ! What, on

the other hand, does the Holy Scripture say of the pure? We read in the Book of Wisdom: 'Oh, how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory; for the memory thereof is immortal' (Wis. iv. 1).

Devout Christian, withdraw with horror from every danger to your perfect purity. See behind every impure temptation the frightful flames of the hellish fires ready to engulf you for all eternity. Jesus Christ, who has died for you, asks you if you prefer a base gratification to His everlasting love. Hide your fickle heart in the most pure Heart of your Lord; and beseech the most holy Mary to obtain for you the grace to keep your heart unsullied and pure.

February 24.

'BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS.'

I. Our Lord came to bring peace to men of good-will, and He wishes the peace of sincere charity to reign everywhere. He promises a rich blessing and everlasting reward to all who promote this reign of peace. The Church may be styled the City of Peace, for Christ left that heavenly gift with her when He said to His Apostles: 'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you' (St. John xiv. 27). As there is no peace for the sinner, we may account as the first class of peacemakers true penitents, who, moved by grace, seek sincerely to be reconciled with God, and who therefore leave nothing undone to secure for themselves once more His friendship, and the comfort of a good conscience which accompanies it. In the second place, and more properly, peacemakers are charitable Christians, and zealous priests and missioners, who strive to bring about the conversion of sinners, so as, by their prayers and exhortations, to effect reconciliation between them and God: thus shall they save their souls from death (St. James v. 20).

Devout Christian, you cannot enjoy peace if you are not in friendship with God. Happily, you avoid mortal sin. Strive also to avoid all lesser sins, for these, too, are an offence to God. Extend the charity of your prayers, and, as occasion may occur, the help of your advice and kind offices to poor sinners to bring them back to God's friendship and to the way of salvation. Thus will you be a peacemaker and a true disciple of Christ through Whom God would reconcile the world unto Himself (2 Cor. v. 19).

II. Peacemakers are, in the third place, those exemplary Christians who strive ever to cultivate friendly relations with their neighbour; and who therefore, when any misunderstanding arises, discreetly use means to remove it,

endeavour to prevent disunion, and to bring about reconciliation if variance has followed. In the fourth place and lastly, those charitable Christians are peacemakers who exert themselves to effect reconciliation when they see neighbours at variance. There is upon the parties who are thus at variance an obligation of making their peace with God, Who has been offended in various ways by their disunion and animosity, and also the obligation of returning to terms of charity between themselves. The fulfilment of these obligations is often difficult; a peacemaker is needed. Will no one undertake the charitable office? 'Blessed,' says our Lord, 'are the peacemakers.' The peacemaker performs a noble and highly meritorious work; he puts a stop to the offence offered to God, he brings neighbours together again in the bonds of Christian charity, and he removes the scandal given by the disunion. His work is all the more meritorious when, through his charitable efforts in the interests of peace, he brings contempt and trouble upon himself.

Love, devout Christian, the ways of peace both for yourself and for others; and, using all discretion and consideration, labour to put an end to disunion when you perceive any between neighbours. Beware of an indiscreet zeal that might intensify and prolong the disunion, and widen the breach rather than heal it and close it. A true peacemaker will act prudently.

III. Our Lord said: 'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.' This blessing is promised to Christians who cultivate the spirit of Christian peace and charity, and who endeavour to promote it in others; also to such as by their prayers, exhortations and kind offices become peacemakers between neighbours who are at variance, or between sinners and God. In these ways they prove themselves children of the 'God of peace,' and followers of Christ, who is styled the 'Prince of Peace,' and they will themselves taste the blessings of that holy peace which is one of the fruits of the Holy Ghost. Moreover they will earn for themselves the gratitude and goodwill of those to whom they have been the means of bringing

peace. Having tasted in this life that peace of God which surpasses all understanding, they may also look confidently to the enjoyment of the everlasting peace reserved for the true children of God in Heaven.

Devout Christian, take as addressed to yourself the words of St. Paul: 'Follow peace with all men and holiness: without which no man shall see God' (Heb. xii. 14); and seek the reward which our Lord promises to peacemakers by striving to promote good feeling among neighbours. Dissensions are injurious to religion and disastrous to charity. Take a discreet part in putting an end to them. Beseech Mary to obtain for yourself and for others the gift and the blessings of a holy peace and of a tranquil conscience, that you may ever serve God with true devotion.

February 25.

DISSENSIONS.

I. It is sad that men who are called to be the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of everlasting peace, should ever be in strife with one another during their sojourn on earth. Yet, unhappily, dissensions among Christ's followers do occur, notwithstanding that He wishes them to be known by the distinctive mark of charity. Charity will not be maintained without mutual consideration, and without a sincere spirit of Christian forbearance. When personal rights are exaggerated, when there is no toleration for the peculiarities or faulty ways of the neighbour, when personal sensitiveness is not corrected, when offence is easily taken, fuel is prepared which the smallest spark will set ablaze—which is to say, that dissensions may readily occur. Very culpable are those who act unjustly towards their neighbour, for thereby they give rise to strife and to embitterment of feeling. Dissensions and disunion are particularly painful when they exist in the family circle, and every reasonable and charitable effort should be made to put an end to them without delay.

Be persuaded, devout Christian, that the path of meekness and humility is also the path of peace and of mutual good-understanding. Beware of giving offence to any neighbour, and strive always to avoid wrangling and dissension. Pray to God for a spirit of wisdom and of charity, for such a spirit is more precious than all earthly gifts and treasures.

II. Reflect that Christians should use prudence in their words and conversations if they would avoid dissensions and misunderstandings. An unkind word or remark will

be carried about until it reaches the person affected by it, and its malice will then have become seriously exaggerated; and it may even happen that the person himself may consider that only half the truth has reached him. Great anger and dislike may thus be engendered. Prudence also demands that Christians should receive with caution any statement reflecting upon themselves which may be communicated to them; for sometimes there is more malice of purpose in him who makes the communication than in the person who originally made the statement—besides, there may be serious exaggeration, in both matter and form, in the statement as it reaches them.

Accustom yourself, devout Christian, to interpret in a spirit of charity all remarks that may reach you, and do not easily take offence. It is better to err on the side of charity than on the other side. Speak always with due consideration of your neighbour. Beware of carrying about any unkind remarks about others that may reach you. Love always the ways of charity and of peace.

III. If Christians should ever watch over their utterances lest they should give offence to their neighbour, especially should they watch over their feelings. Dissensions are usually the fruit of rancour and envy. When such feelings as these find place in the hearts of Christians, and are nourished there, only an occasion is needed to give rise to that unkindness in speech and conduct which will cause a breach of charity and perhaps even prolonged disunion. Such sentiments corrupt the heart and embitter it: they should never have place in the hearts of Christians who are strictly bound to love one another. What an admirable lesson is taught by our Lord who, to bind men to one another and all to God, offered to God the infinite satisfaction of His humiliations, sufferings, and cruel death! With this Divine example before them, will Christians admit rancour into their hearts, foment dissensions, and glory in their enmities?

Learn, devout Christian, from the teachings and example of Jesus Christ, and from the practice of His Saints, to suppress in your heart, and to correct, all feelings of enmity

and dislike, and to live in peace with all men. Pray for an increase of true and practical charity; and turning to Mary, always so gentle and so loving, beg of her to obtain for you a charitable and a forgiving heart that you may ever be dear to the Sacred Heart of her Divine Son.

February 26.

'BLESSED ARE THEY THAT SUFFER PERSECUTION FOR JUSTICE' SAKE.'

I. BECAUSE of sin, and because of the relation of Christians to Christ crucified, sufferings are inseparable from this present life. Christians should accept them with humility and patience, submitting dutifully to God's designs in sending them, or in permitting them, in order that in this manner they may sanctify their sufferings and turn them to good account. Sufferings borne with Christian virtue avail much as a satisfaction for sin, and as a means of obtaining a rich reward. Sufferings sometimes come in the form of persecution. Our Lord tells us that when such persecution is endured in the cause of justice, duty, and virtue, it wins for Christians who endure it a holy reward. Such was the case during the cruel persecutions which were the glory of the Church during the first three centuries of her existence, when the blood of the Martyrs became the seed of the Church.

Admire, devout Christian, the triumphant character of the Divine dispensations. Victory must in the end side with God and with justice ; and persecutors will chafe under disastrous failure, and their place will be found no more. The Church lives and triumphs, but her persecutors have passed away and are forgotten. Commit your case ever with confidence into the hands of God, and hold your soul in patience.

II. Reflect that persecution, by God's permission, may come upon Christians in various ways. To the persecution of imprisonment and of the sword endured by the holy Martyrs may be added also the persecution of the tongue of the calumniator, every kind of unjust aggression directed against one's person, character, or property, every persistent

unprovoked attempt to cause annoyance or loss, and every unmerited affliction or harsh word, when any of these forms of persecution are employed against Christians on account of their faith, virtue, good life, or good works. Sometimes, too, when the wicked cannot succeed in their designs against the virtuous, they turn upon them with spiteful malice, and seek to make them feel the full force of their wrath. Christians should not be disconcerted or discouraged when they find themselves the object of such persecutions for justice' sake. Let them bear in mind that God's servants have usually something to endure by which their virtue and devotedness may be put to the test. What a glorious array of martyrs, confessors and virgins, Holy Church has inscribed in the calendar of her Saints! All these suffered for God, and in the cause of faith and virtue. Their lustrous example forbids Christians to be dejected or cowardly under persecution.

Pray, devout Christian, for courage, patience, and endurance under contradictions, annoyances, and temptations, that you may not be faithless in following Christ crucified; but that by submitting dutifully to God's holy will under these trials you may attain to the crown promised to His true servants.

III. Reflect that the persecutions endured by Christians for justice' sake bring a blessing both on themselves and on the Church, and merit a special heavenly reward. 'Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.' Persecutions are attended in this life by many happy results; for instance, they tend to detach Christians more and more from this world and its vanities, and to direct their aspirations more earnestly to God and to spiritual blessings; they are endured for God's sake, and are rewarded here by heavenly favours; and they bring Christians into a closer resemblance to Christ, and it is written that they must suffer with Him if they would be glorified with Him (Rom. viii. 17). Christians should not therefore consider themselves badly used if, in the cause of justice, charity, piety, or religion, they meet with ill-will, contradictions, and such-like perse-

cutions, but, like the Apostles, they should rejoice that they have been counted worthy to suffer stripes for Christ's Name's sake. There is, further, the everlasting heavenly reward awaiting them, and the thought of it should make them count as little the malice of men, but hold as invaluable the persecutions resulting from it, seeing that these persecutions, borne with patience, will put them in possession of so great a reward.

Pray, devout Christian, that you may ever prove yourself a valiant disciple of your heavenly Master ; and beseech Mary to obtain for you the gift of fortitude, that you may not be daunted by the malice or ferocity of your persecutors, but may turn their persecutions to the glory of God.

February 27.

SHIRKING THE CROSS.

I. Reflect that many Christians do not love Christ's Cross. This may often be accounted for by a want of understanding the value of it, or by their not duly appreciating it when its value is known, or, again, by their not having the will and the courage to carry it. Christians are undoubtedly called to carry the cross after their Lord and Master, and not to be the disciples of the world. Though living in the world and pursuing their avocation in it, they must yet be ever wisely guided by the heavenly teaching of Jesus Christ. The world would entice them by its delusive vanities, its short-lived and often perilous pleasures, its empty distinctions, and its paltry rewards; but they must not permit themselves to be seduced from the path of a devout Christian life by any of these attractions. By Christ's Cross we understand the holy standard of faith, virtue, dutifulness, and piety set up by Jesus Christ, in following which we must deny ourselves in many ways, and bear reproach and persecution for His sake. Can we find a nobler Leader and Guide, or a holier standard? To follow the Cross is to be Christ's faithful disciples, to walk in the way of holy living, to renounce all evil and inordinate affections and pursuits, and to bear with patience the various trials of life. All this conduces to spiritual joy, to supernatural merit, and to the heavenly reward.

Desire ever, devout Christian, to be dutiful in following your Lord and Master, and do not shirk the cross He would place on your shoulder. Pray for grace to understand the value of the cross, and be not deceived by the delusive pleasures offered by the world.

II. It is not enough that Christians should understand in some measure the value of the Cross; they must also so far

appreciate it as to desire it for themselves. We read of Saints who prayed that they might die if they were to be deprived of sufferings. All Christians are not called to this perfection of devotedness to the Cross, but there will be no satisfactory progress in Christian perfection without that resignation to God's will under the trials of life which betokens a practical appreciation of them. Christians must therefore love the Cross, at least to the extent demanded by this resignation. Many seek to shirk the Cross because they do not love it; but trials will overtake them in spite of all they may wish or do, and then they will experience dissatisfaction, bitterness, and unrest, and they will lose the merit of these trials through their complaints, impatience, and unwillingness to bear them. Happy are those Christians who dutifully submit themselves to God's appointments! Let them take comfort from the words quoted by St. Paul: 'Whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth' (Heb. xii. 6); let them regard the sufferings and sorrows, the labours and anxieties, which fall to their lot as tokens of God's love, and appreciate them accordingly as blessings in disguise.

Beg of God, devout Christian, the grace to love the Cross; if you love it, you will embrace it willingly and with spiritual profit. And when trials come, imitate David by having recourse to God in fervent prayer. 'In my affliction,' said David, 'I called upon the Lord' (Ps. xvii. 7). Be confident that God will sustain you and comfort you.

III. There are, alas! Christians who have no will or courage to carry the Cross. Such as these wish to reach Heaven by an easy and comfortable road, or not to reach it at all. There is practically no way to Heaven but the way of the Cross, although the Cross may not weigh as heavily upon some Christians as upon others. Those Christians are wanting in heavenly wisdom and in sterling virtue who have not the will or the courage to carry the Cross. They recognize the cost of reaching Heaven, and they are not prepared to pay it. They prefer the vanities, the ease, the gaiety, and the comforts of a worldly life; they object to self-restraint and to mortification; they

have no attraction for piety, and they pursue what will gratify their natural inclinations. They are strangers to the way of grace, and they set no true value on spiritual gifts. At the end of their lives these Christians will have their hands empty, and fear and misgiving will desolate their minds. The Cross would have brought them reassurance, peace, and victory ; but the world will have brought them misery, want, and defeat.

Be wise, devout Christian, in not shirking the Cross ; let your alarm be, not lest you should meet with trials, but lest your life should be without suffering. You cannot love Jesus truly without loving His Cross. If you love the Cross, He will support you when bearing it, and reward you with many consolations. Beseech Mary, your heavenly Intercessor, to obtain for you patience under your trials, and a desire to bear them always in conformity with the Divine will.

February 28.

SERVITUDE OF SIN.

I. Men who commit mortal sin fall under a base servitude. In many cases they contract evil habits and become subject to them ; but in every case they fall indirectly under the servitude of Satan. St. John therefore says : 'He that committeth sin is of the devil : for the devil sinneth from the beginning' (1 St. John iii. 8). We all condemn the action of our first parents in disregarding God's command, and we lament the evils that resulted from their sin ; but the lesson seems to be lost sight of by men who commit mortal sin. Such men repeat the conduct which, in the case of our first parents, was so offensive to God and so disastrous to man. They incur guilt and punishment which, of themselves, they are powerless to remove or to escape from, and they separate themselves from God, their only and sovereign Good, through their loss of His grace. They pass from under His standard to the standard of Satan. If they die without repentance, they will be condemned by God's infinite Justice to the kingdom of eternal punishment. The Judge shall say to them : 'Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels' (St. Matt. xxv. 41).

Devout Christian, renew your faith in the evil of mortal sin. Lament the perversity and folly of men who commit it. Grieve over the offence thus offered to God, and pray for the grace to prefer every temporal calamity to the disgrace of committing mortal sin. Ever despise the base temptations of Satan.

II. When Christians commit mortal sin they fall from grace ; in other words, from the friendship of God and from a condition of sanctification. They then pass under the disgraceful bondage of sin. This truth was taught by our

Lord when He said: 'Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin' (St. John viii. 34). They depart from the regions of spiritual peace and happiness and of supernatural and everlasting merit, and enter into the region of spiritual unrest and misery, and of supernatural sterility. The prophet presents us with a picture of their spiritual failure where he says: 'The fig-tree shall not blossom: and there shall be no spring in the vines. The labour of the olive-tree shall fail: and the fields shall yield no food.' Then the prophet expresses, on the other hand, the joy and security of the just: 'But I will rejoice in the Lord. . . . The Lord God is my strength: and He will make my feet like the feet of harts: and He the Conqueror will lead me upon my high places singing psalms' (Hab. iii. 18, 19). The wicked may not sing hymns of triumph and of joy, for they are departed from God, and they are fallen. St. Peter says: 'By whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave' (2 St. Pet. ii. 19). Christians who truly value the friendship of God, the precious gifts of grace, and the heavenly inheritance, will detest mortal sin and avoid falling under its base servitude.

Devout Christian, thank God for the blessings of His grace, and pray that you may never fall into mortal sin. Say with David: 'It is good to give praise to the Lord: and to sing to Thy Name, O most High' (Ps. xci. 2). . . . 'I will praise Thee with uprightness of heart' (Ps. cxviii. 7). Cling ever to the ways of virtue and of grace, in which the just have ever found peace. David said: 'Therefore have I loved Thy commandments above gold and the topaz. Therefore was I directed to all Thy commandments: I have hated all wicked ways' (Ps. cxviii. 127, 128).

III. The base servitude of sin is attended by fatal consequences, from which only the mercy of God can deliver the wicked. St. Paul says: 'Know you not that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are whom you obey: whether it be of sin, unto death, or of obedience, unto justice' (Rom. vi. 16). Rightly, then, is grievous sin called mortal: it inflicts spiritual death upon the soul, and this, in the impenitent, is followed by ever-

lasting death. We learn from other words of the same Apostle the power of Satan over men in mortal sin. He bids the servant of the Lord admonish with modesty them that resist the truth, and he says: 'If peradventure God may give them repentance to know the truth, and they may recover themselves from the snares of the devil, by whom they are held captive at his will' (2 Tim. ii. 25-6). With the inspired teaching of Holy Writ before them, how can men pretend to see no terrible evil in mortal sin, and no fatal servitude? Once they have fallen, who shall raise them? Once they have embraced the servitude of sin, who shall release them from it? They must desire release, they must detest their sins, they must look to God, they must pray suppliantly and humbly for His mercy, and they must fulfil the conditions of true conversion.

Devout Christian, strive to be ever loyal and fervent in leading a good life, lest through remissness or temptation you fall under bondage. Let it be your joy to walk in the holy way of God's commandments, of piety, and of Christian self-restraint. Pray to Mary, so beautiful in her sinlessness, to obtain for you a spirit of guardedness against all evil, and victory over all your spiritual enemies. Choose your standard wisely. 'The Lord is only for them that wait upon Him in the way of truth and justice' (Ecclus. xxxiv. 22).

February 29.

RELIGION'S PLACE IN LIFE.

I. The grace of religion which is infused into our souls at Baptism, depends for its development and maturity upon many interior and exterior graces. A child does not grow up religious without the aid of instruction and example. Cruel are those un-Christian parents who deprive their children of religious instruction, and who do not, by their own religious practices, train their children in the service of God. To neglect such as this may be attributed the ignorance of the masses concerning religious belief, the falling away from faith and piety, the increase of public and secret crime, and the widespread indifferentism about spiritual matters which are witnessed in the world to-day. Faith is the groundwork of religion, and this must come by hearing (Rom. x. 17)—that is, by instruction. The earlier stage of instruction must not be neglected. It devolves upon mothers to impart the first religious ideas to their children. These ideas are very elementary; but, as they constitute the very roots of the religious knowledge afterwards to be attained to, they are of the utmost consequence. With this elementary instruction there is instilled into the children's minds a sense of religion, which takes root there, and which is a most precious and important preparation for the practice of religion which is to follow as the children grow older. The first religious impressions should, then, come from parents. Parents must regard it as their high office to bring up their children in the knowledge, love, and service of God, and they should begin early the fulfilment of the duties of this office.

Devout Christian, as occasion may offer, strive to inculcate religious knowledge and principles in the minds of the young, thus to furnish them with the safest guide

during this present life, and to help them to direct their steps to the attainment of their heavenly and eternal destiny.

II. After the early home training of children comes their school training. Religion must have its place of honour here. While children's minds are opening, and taking in that fund of knowledge which is to help them on their way through life, it would be disastrous to neglect teaching them what is of the very first importance. Catholic children must be taught the Catholic faith, and trained in the practice of the Catholic religion. Parents are guilty of serious neglect of duty, and they do their children an irreparable wrong when, during the years in which their children are receiving their education, they send them to schools in which they are deprived of Catholic religious training. The moral influence of non-Catholic masters, and association with non-Catholic companions, cannot but tend to blunt the children's Catholic instincts, and may even lead to indifference about religion at that very early period of life when it is so necessary that religion should be instilled into their minds. Religion must not be superficial; it must burrow into the heart, and take possession of it; it must be the mainspring and guide of conduct. But how will it be this, when the imparting of religious knowledge and the training in religious practices have no place in education? The widest and most perfect knowledge of the classics and of mathematics cannot supply the place of religion. When religious training has no place in the school curriculum, will not the young attribute a higher place in their own mind to secular subjects than to it? How defective is that system of education which leaves scholars in ignorance of the Divine Trinity, of Christ our Saviour, of the conditions and means of salvation, and of the great and everlasting hereafter!

Devout Christian, ever advocate true and sound principles of education. Our Lord came to be the Teacher of men; but are children to be brought up deprived of His teaching? Education without religion will not train men to be good Christians, or even good members of society.

III. The early lessons of religious education must not be forgotten when school days are over. Religion, deep-seated in the heart, must remain ever enshrined there, and must accompany us everywhere in every stage of our existence. Alas! many men fall away from the practice of their religion, and become a source of disedification to their families, and of anxiety and sorrow to the pastors of the Church. Many, owing to this neglect of religion, run into evil courses, get involved in unjust transactions, and contract unhappy marriages. How can such as these bring up their children in dutifulness and piety? Religion should be man's comforter at the close of his earthly career. It should help him to sanctify his declining years, and to prepare himself to pass into eternity. O careless Catholics, will you invoke the aid and comfort of religion only when you are dying? Would you wish it to be absent from your death-bed? Would you like to depart laden with your sins, deprived of the grace of the Holy Sacraments, and without prayer in your heart and on your lips? You would not wish this. Recognize, then, the place religion should have in your lives. Both early and late, in your health and strength as well as in sickness and death, religion, which is the queen of virtues, must be your friend and companion, your guide and support, your teacher and your comforter.

Devout Christian, thank God for inspiring you with religious sentiments. Let your practice of religion be every day more earnest. Pray that you may never fall away. Look up to Mary for example, and plead for her prayers. To Mary's soul religion was as its very life, and to her sanctification as an ever-flowing channel.

March 1.

THE MALICE OF MORTAL SIN.

I. We know that mortal sin is a grievous offence against God, which deprives the soul of sanctifying grace and merits everlasting punishment. Only the Precious Blood of our Divine Lord can adequately atone for so great an outrage offered to the Majesty and Sovereignty of God. The malice of mortal sin is seen in the sinner's turning away from God, and preferring his own evil will to God's most holy will, in order to gratify his own base passion or waywardness, or to gain some temporary satisfaction not permitted by the Divine Law. The malice grows before us when we consider the lowly condition of the sinner, his obligations to God Whom he offends, and the miserable gratification for which he abandons God, the Sovereign Good. The sinner is God's creature, indebted to God not only for creation, but also for so many blessings of providence, for the boon of redemption, and for the priceless privilege of Divine adoption. He is entirely dependent on God, to Whom he owes worship, obedience, gratitude, and love. The sinner's indebtedness is therefore beyond all computation; yet he turns from God by mortal sin, and instead of loving Him and serving Him, he offers Him offence and outrage.

Devout Christian, say with David: 'A fainting hath taken hold of me, because of the wicked that forsake Thy law' (Ps. cxviii. 53). 'Remember not our former iniquities . . . . and forgive us our sins for Thy Name's sake' (Ps. lxxviii. 8, 9). Let indignation fill your soul, seeing how sinners despise God.

II. When we consider the outrage offered to God by mortal sin, it should not surprise us that it is deemed so great an evil, and that impenitent sinners are consigned to

everlasting punishment. What should surprise us is that the Almighty, infinite in all perfections, deigns at all, and deigns upon such easy terms, to condone and pardon mortal sin. Faith tells us that He does so without detriment to His justice and greatness, because of the atonement of infinite value offered by His only-begotten Son, who sacrificed His life for the sinner's salvation. How wonderful are the ways of Divine Love! God forgives because God atones. God Himself tenders the satisfaction which obtains forgiveness. In view of this satisfaction God turns towards the sinner. What has the sinner done? 'Thou hast forsaken Me, saith the Lord: thou art gone backward' (Jer. xv. 6). Lowly as the sinner is, God would not have first forsaken him. No, it is the sinner who abandons God; just as Eve turned from Him and listened to the tempter, and just as the Prodigal left his father and went into a far-off country. God, therefore, complains: 'Thou hast forsaken Me.' What have you done, O sinner? You have departed from your only and everlasting Good, and you have taken the path of evil and of perdition. Retrace your steps, seek reconciliation. Plead for mercy, promise amendment.

Devout Christian, dread every danger of falling away from God. Cling to the way of piety. Let it ever be your joy to offer God a ready and perfect service, and view with sincere regret all your faultiness.

III. The malice of the sinner in committing mortal sin grows in our eyes when we go on to consider the motive which leads him to turn away from God, the object or gain which is sought, and the kind of satisfaction which is derived from his sin. God is abandoned and contemned for the sake of a momentary sinful pleasure, for a trifling gain, or on account of a weak, unworthy fear, or of unwillingness to make a little effort. Such things as these are placed in the balance against God and His grace and friendship and everlasting rewards, and they are permitted to outweigh them. The flowing fountain of all good is left for the poisonous stream, or for the dried-up, broken cistern of evil (Jer. ii. 13). What an indignity is thus

offered to the Divine Majesty! The miserable sinner regards neither his own welfare and everlasting interest nor the infinite claims of God to his honour and love. Could malice go further? Often the sinner has scarcely made the evil choice, and despised God's claims, when he also despises himself, and sinks into a condition of misery and recklessness. How changed he is from what he was when in the state of grace! Sin has robbed him, wounded him, and brought him nigh to his doom; and of himself he cannot rise, he cannot escape the everlasting punishment. O evil of sin! A gleam of hope remains. Let not the sinner despise God's proffered mercy; let him not delay to repent.

Devout Christian, pray for the grace to detest this great evil of mortal sin. Reflect upon its malice, seen in the outrage it offers to God, and the guilt and misery in which it involves the sinner. Pray to Mary, the 'Mirror of Justice,' to intercede for you and shield you from so great an evil, and from all dangers that might lead to it.

March 2.

EFFECTS OF MORTAL SIN.

I. We do well to reflect from time to time upon the evil of mortal sin. Men in mortal sin have turned away from God, and from their last end. The spiritual riches of God's bounty are no longer lavished upon them, nor do they experience true peace or consolation, for they are now sinners. Sinners are wearied and faint with unproductive labour, so far as the heavenly reward is concerned; and the air they breathe is impregnated with reproach. The evil of mortal sin is seen in its effects. In the first place, by despising God's commandments, and doing what is grievously wrong, the sinner sets himself in opposition to God. God says to him by His prophet: 'Thou hast broken My yoke, thou hast burst My bands, and thou saidst, I will not serve' (Jer. ii. 20). God commands the due observance of His own day, reverence for His own holy Name, purity, temperance, charity, meekness, and honesty; but sinners disregard His commands, and thus offend Him grievously. When mortal sin has been committed, St. Thomas teaches that there is a certain infinity of malice, on account of the Infinity of the Divine Majesty which it outrages. The sinner incurs God's enmity and wrath.

Devout Christian, ever remember God's claims upon your fullest love and service. Let it cause you deep sorrow to see God outraged by His creatures. This malice of mortal sin constitutes its greatest evil.

II. In the second place, mortal sin causes the loss of sanctifying grace. By mortal sin we so far break with God and depart from our last end, as to destroy the bond of Divine charity which binds us in filial love to God. Without charity there can be no salvation. Therefore

St. John says: 'He that committeth sin is of the devil' (1 St. John iii. 8). In the third place, the soul having lost the beautiful garment of Divine grace, becomes now stained with the filth of sin. 'Thou art stained in Thy iniquity before Me, saith the Lord God' (Jer. ii. 22). St. Thomas teaches that venial sin does not impress this pestilential mark upon the soul, but it reduces the ardour of its charity. In the case, however, of mortal sin, the soul loses that spiritual lustre which arises from the proper conformity of its faculties with God and with His laws. The wound inflicted by mortal sin is perceived in the soul's increased propensity to sin. In the fourth place, mortal sin brings upon the sinner trouble of heart and affliction of spirit. 'There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord God' (Isa. lvii. 21). Away from God there cannot be true comfort or repose. Mortal sin causes uneasiness and misgiving. St. Augustine says: 'Thou, O Lord, hast made us for Thyself, and our heart cannot find rest until it rests in Thee.'

Devout Christian, how sad are these results of mortal sin! God wishes men to be happy and innocent; but, alas! they forget their Divine Benefactor and loving Heavenly Father, and by mortal sin they bring upon themselves misery and dishonour.

III. In the fifth place, mortal sin deprives the soul of all the merits for eternal life which it has acquired. These precious merits will indeed be restored upon the sinner's repentance; but they are of no avail while the soul is stained with grievous sin. God says by His prophet: 'If the just man turn himself away from his justice, and do iniquity, . . . all his justices which he hath done, shall not be remembered (Ezech. xviii. 24). Since mortal sin deprives the soul of charity, the sinner is rendered incapable of acquiring supernatural merit. His works performed while he is in the state of sin will not avail him to eternal life. Lastly, mortal sin brings the sinner under condemnation. Attached to the guilt of mortal sin are the punishment of the eternal loss of God, and the punishment of the torments of Hell throughout eternity. How exceedingly great must

the evil be, which justly merits this terrible double punishment! Unrepentant sinners are condemned to everlasting fire. O sinners, what now preserves you from this terrible doom? Only God's patience and mercy. You do not know what time they are allowing you for repentance; it is perhaps drawing to a close.

Devout Christian, all these effects of mortal sin should help to impress you with the gravity of this great evil. Alas, that so many men live in mortal sin! Alas, that so many commit it as though without thought or care! Often pray, saying: O my God, give me the grace never to fall into mortal sin. Ask Mary, your loving heavenly Mother, to obtain this grace for you.

March 3.

MERCY FOR THE SINNER

I. The gleam of hope for the fallen sinner is the light that falls from the Mercy-seat. God is never indifferent while the time of mercy decreed by His inscrutable Providence has not elapsed. Before the sinner fell, God strove in various ways to save him. This was so in Cain's case; for God said to him: 'Why art thou angry, and why is thy countenance fallen?' (Gen. iv. 6.) We picture to ourselves the heavenly Father beholding His child—the sinner—running towards the precipice. He knows how disastrous will be the fall, how great is the evil of mortal sin, and how terrible are its consequences. He calls to His child to warn him, to bring him back, and He places obstacles in the way. Must it be all in vain? Conscience warns the sinner, circumstances providentially occur to thwart him in his plans, friends sometimes caution him, and the words of the priest strike him. All is in vain: he falls. The Heavenly Father sees Himself contemned; but the bowels of His infinite mercy are moved in the sinner's regard. What will He not do, how long will He not wait, if only the sinner will detest his sin and seek pardon? 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live' (Ezech. xxxiii. 11).

Devout Christian, admire the exceeding love and mercy of God, who acts so tenderly with His ungrateful children! Pray for the conversion of sinners, that His erring children may come to see the wickedness and folly of their ways, and return to God and make amends for the past. Thank God for all His mercies shown to yourself.

II. When Adam had sinned he hid himself in the garden. God might have left him in disgrace, and inflicted at once the threatened punishment. But no; He called to him:

'Adam, where art thou?' It was the tender voice of an aggrieved Father, pleading with the guilty conscience of His child. God in His mercy calls back the sinner. He does it by remorse of conscience, by lights given, by sermons or devotions, by striking examples, and even by afflictions. Whatever means God may employ, be they gentle or severe, His child must be spared and brought to reconciliation. When David had to contend with the forces of his rebellious son Absalom, he gave orders to his generals that on no account was his son to be slain: 'Save me the boy Absalom' (2 Kings xviii. 5). Thus would God save the sinner. Yet God does not need him; for He is infinitely happy in Himself, and He has countless faithful ministers and servants, who ever praise Him and do His will. Why, then, does He seek the sinner, even as a good shepherd seeks the sheep that has strayed from the fold? He does so because of His love, because He wishes to save the erring and ungrateful child, because He knows how terrible the consequences will be if His child persists in his wickedness and dies impenitent. It is written: 'If you be willing, and will hearken to Me, you shall eat the good things of the land. But if you will not, and will provoke Me to wrath, the sword shall devour you, because the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it' (Isa. i. 19, 20).

Devout Christian, reflect upon the fatherly love of God, seen in the reproaches experienced by the sinner's conscience, in the many voices calling the sinner to repentance, and in the warnings which point to the punishments that fall on the impenitent. How sad is the sinner's case when all this is in vain!

III. How truly does David say: 'Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven' (Ps. xxxi. 1)! For when at length the sinner, moved by grace, repents and does penance, then is lavished on him all that love which is portrayed in the father's treatment of the prodigal son upon his return home. That most tender and compassionate father fell on his son's neck weeping for joy, he imparted the kiss of forgiveness, he clothed his son anew in the robes becoming his exalted station, and he made a rejoicing

for all his household and friends. How is it with the repentant sinner? The fountain of Divine mercy sends forth the saving waters which cleanse and comfort the penitent; and grace, as a beautiful robe, once more adorns his soul. He is received again into the Divine friendship, and associated with the Saints in Heaven and with the just on earth, to partake of countless blessings; he recovers his past merits and his right to the heavenly inheritance; peace is restored to his conscience and joy to his heart; the Eucharistic Table is spread for him; and he is comforted with the cheering hope of his everlasting salvation. How different is his condition from that of men whose sins are not forgiven! How touching and how generous is God's forgiveness!

Devout Christian, perhaps you have in the past experienced mercy such as that which we have been considering. Ever return thanks for God's mercies. Say with David: 'The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever' (Ps. lxxxviii. 2). Continue now to walk in the path of grace, which is the righteous way of peace and salvation. Pray to Mary for her patronage and protection, and seek through her powerful intercession the help you need in order to persevere in grace.

March 4.

HOPE IN GOD'S MERCY.

I. CHRISTIANS would not seek the path of repentance, nor would conversion reassure and comfort them, if they had not a firm hope in God's mercy. They must feel that the seal of Divine mercy has been set upon the work of conversion before they enjoy its sweet consolations. Mercy is displayed in every stage of that work. If sinners experience remorse of conscience, it is the result, not of their evil-doing, but of God's merciful regard moving them to consciousness of their guilt and of their fall from grace and to regret for the sin committed. God is thus first in operating in the work of conversion; by interior inspirations and by exterior influences He deigns to call sinners to repentance, with a view to showing them mercy. What He begins He wishes to carry through and to accomplish. Let sinners then ever praise the mercy of God, who does not abandon them when they have abandoned Him. He begins at once to move them to a conviction of their wretched state in order that He may lead them to repent.

Devout Christian, be ever firm and constant in your hope in God's mercy. Say with holy David: 'But I, as a fruitful olive-tree in the house of God, have hoped in the mercy of God for ever, yea for ever and ever' (Ps. li. 10) Thank God for all His mercies to yourself, and for having by His grace preserved you from many sins.

II. God says by His prophet: 'Is it My will that a sinner should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should be converted from his ways, and live?' (Ezech. xviii. 23). Christians learn from these and other such words comfort and reassurance concerning the hope of conversion that they may entertain in the case of sinners. God, far from casting them off, desires their conversion.

To effect it He sometimes sends them severe trials, that in their affliction they may enter into themselves and turn to Him. A visitation of sickness, of bereavement, or of temporal losses, has often led to wonderful conversions. Sometimes even the loss of peace of mind which accompanies sin (Isa. xlviii. 22) causes sinners to lament their unhappy condition and to seek the path of repentance. Sometimes, too, the humiliation or disgrace resulting from a fall into sin proves the occasion of repentance and amendment. Praised be the goodness and mercy of God, who employs so many ways of bringing back to His grace His children who have offended Him and even despised Him! When He cannot win them by the remembrance of His benefits and by fresh tokens of His love, He sends them chastisements, because their hearts are so hard and their wills so perverse.

Have confidence, devout Christian, in the tender mercy of your loving Heavenly Father. Pray that sinners may not provoke God by remaining in sin and may not abuse His long-suffering. Repent daily of your own daily faults, and be resolved ever to correct them, and to avoid carefully what might offend God.

III. The mercy of God is portrayed in the conduct of the Good Shepherd seeking the sheep that strayed. God has no need of the sinner, yet He pursues him and calls him; and when the sinner responds to the invitation to mercy, God carries him home to the fold, and to safe and wholesome pastures, rejoicing the while that He has found His sheep that was lost. There is no bitterness in the Divine reproaches, and there is no harshness in the penance that is imposed. There is no delay in the Divine assurances of forgiveness and perfect reconciliation. Upon his repentance the sinner is forthwith re-established in the Divine favour, and he is make partaker with all the just in spiritual and heavenly blessings. He receives strength to overcome his failings and to abandon the crooked ways of his former life, while at the same time his heart is turned to love virtue and to desire only what is right and pleasing to God. Thus is his conversion accepted, and blessed, and

made perfect. Let, then, the sinner exclaim with holy David: 'The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever!' (Ps. lxxxviii. 2).

Admire, devout Christian, God's merciful dealings with sinners, and let this fill you with confidence that He will not be less merciful in His dealings with those who seek ever to please Him. Cultivate ever a spirit of true compunction, and live ever in humility on account of your many failings; then will God accept your sighs of sorrow and extend abundantly to you His inexhaustible mercy. Pray to Mary, the Mother of mercy, to obtain for you great confidence in God's mercy and a constant detestation of every kind of sin.

March 5.

SOME THOUGHTS ON GOD'S MERCY.

I. CHRISTIANS should find comfort in reflecting upon many inspired words of David, in which he displays his confidence in God's mercy. He says in one place: 'God hath spoken once, these two things have I heard: that power belongeth to God, and mercy to Thee, O Lord' (Ps. lxi. 12, 13). In another place he declares how confidently and perseveringly he trusted in God's mercy: 'But I, as a fruitful olive-tree in the house of God, have hoped in the mercy of God for ever, yea, for ever and ever' (Ps. li. 10). In yet another place David says: 'His tender mercies are over all His works' (Ps. cxliv. 9). Finally, he says: 'The mercy of the Lord is from eternity and unto eternity upon them that fear Him' (Ps. cii. 17). 'Thou hast said: Mercy shall be built up for ever in the Heavens' (Ps. lxxxviii. 3). St. Paul, in the New Law, offers Christians similar comfort, where he says: 'But God (who is rich in mercy) for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ (by Whose grace you are saved)' (Eph. ii. 4, 5). At our coming into the world we were all equally dead in sin—there was no distinction, save in the case of Mary Immaculate; Mercy waited upon us to cleanse us in the waters of Baptism. We afterwards fell into various sins and Mercy again waited upon us to purify our soul in the Sacrament of Penance. Praises and thanks be for ever to God Who deigns thus to show us mercy!

Devout Christian, renew your trust in God's infinite mercy! Ever pray for it for yourself and for others: 'Lord, have mercy on us: Christ, have mercy on us.' Pray for this mercy with fervent dispositions of compunction and confidence.

II. How much mercy is needed! If it were not extended to the fallen race, men would find no pleasure in the beauties of nature, no comfort in their homes, and no satisfaction in the smiles of fortune; and there would be no cheering hope for the future. Everything would be dreary, darksome, and sad. But how different mercy has made everything! We have experienced mercy in the past; tokens of it surround us at the present, in the economy of God's dealings with us; and we hope that it will not abandon us but be with us in the future. Hopefully, then, may we say with David: 'In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded' (Ps. xxx. 2). God's mercy abounds more than our need; it is overflowing, infinite. God is 'rich in mercy'; therefore we, poor creatures that we are, are not able to exhaust it. David addressed himself to Him, saying: 'For Thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild: and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Thee' (Ps. lxxxv. 5). We admire the bounteousness of God in all His works. How richly He has blessed us in the natural order, in the universe in which He has established us, and in the gifts of nature with which He has provided us for mind and body. Even richer are His spiritual gifts and favours bestowed upon us, or provided for us. Through these we are enlightened, purified, sanctified, strengthened, and saved. In keeping with all this bounteousness is the character of His surpassing mercy.

Devout Christian, let not the thought of your weakness and poverty, nor even of your faultiness, discourage you. Humble yourself, and cast yourself on the Divine mercy.

III. We see the riches of God's mercy displayed in the mystery of Redemption. All men have been redeemed. Our Lord came as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world (St. John i. 29). St. Paul says: 'There is one God, and one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus: Who gave Himself a redemption for all' (1 Tim. ii. 5, 6). Our Lord paid the price of His Precious Blood even for the redemption of those who are reprobate and whom He foreknew would be lost. Mercy calls sinners to repentance. These calls are numberless. To every sinner God

speaks more than once. The tribunal of Penance is erected in every land, and ministers of Absolution are distributed all over the world. As the countless absolutions are pronounced on earth, pardons flow from the Mercy-seat in Heaven. 'Whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in Heaven' (St. Matt. xviii. 18). Every kind and degree of sin and every number of sins are made pardonable. Mercy was also extended to Adam and Eve, to David, to Mary Magdalen, to Saul, to Augustine. Who will not hope in the Divine mercy? Even when sins have been repeated after repentance, the gates of mercy and pardon have been opened again to the miserable sinner upon his fresh repentance.

Dearest Christian, be consoled by the consideration of God's mercy. How effectual it is! How transcendent is the character of its victory over sin and over man's weakness! See the trophies of its victory in the wicked who have been made just, and in the converted sinners who are now Saints in Heaven. Pray to Mary to beseech her to obtain for you the grace never to fall away, and never to reject God's mercy or to be unworthy of it.

March 6.

THE THOUGHT OF GOD'S MERCY CONSOLES US.

I. We read in the Canticle of Canticles, concerning the Spouse: 'His fruit was sweet to my palate' (ii. 3). God's mercy takes away the bitterness of sin, and comforts us with spiritual sweetness, granted to us by the Divine Bounty as a fruit of repentance. David says: 'The Lord is sweet and righteous: therefore He will give a law to sinners in the way. . . . All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth, to them that seek after His covenant and His testimonies' (Ps. xxiv. 8, 10). The converted sinner walks according to God's law, and enjoys comfort and safety, feeling that God has not rejected him, but has received him among His friends and servants. All this consoles him; and now he may rely on God's promises of His mercy and help now, and of His rewards hereafter. How happy, then, is the sinner in his conversion! His sins are no longer as the handwriting on the wall (Dan. v. 5), to fill him with alarm; for the Precious Blood has blotted them out of God's memory, and the sinner has received from his most merciful Father the kiss of peace (St. Luke xv. 20). The Heavenly Father knows his weakness and faultiness; but the converted sinner, like every servant of God, does not despond on account of these things; for while he strives to amend his ways, he knows that God will yet in compassion bear with him; for 'the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth.'

Devout Christian, let not your past sins, nor your present faultiness, fill you with alarm; but only seek at all times to struggle with your weakness, and humble yourself on account of your faults. The thought of God's mercy will console you.

II. If we are able to calm our mind concerning the past

and the present, perhaps misgivings may arise about the future. The thought of God's mercy will come to reassure us. It is indeed true that we have no absolute guarantee of our being saved, yet there are many Divine promises to reassure us, and to save us from despondency. We know that we have a death to die, and a judgment to face after it. Everything (under God) depends upon our perseverance and upon our dying in the state of grace. No one, it is true, can take our place in these matters, or become our guarantee; but yet we are full of hope. Why? Because God is merciful and compassionate towards us. If we have our weaknesses, God is yet our strength and our Protector. If death has its 'darksome doors' (Job xxxviii. 17), the light of God's countenance shining upon us will cheer us. If God's judgments are formidable, His mercy is tender. When, therefore, we look to the future, let us not be dismayed at the prospect of the labours, sorrows, temptations, and other difficulties and trials which we may meet with, for God will mercifully support us, and turn all things to our profit, while He directs them to His own glory according to His eternal designs.

Devout Christian, commit yourself with loving trust to God's providence, and remove from you all inconsiderate anxiety about the future. Death and judgment lose their terrors when the bright light of Infinite Mercy falls on them. Say with David: 'Thy mercy will follow me all the days of my life.' 'Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me' (Ps. xxii).

III. Mercy is not for ourselves only; the mercies of God are for others too. Let this comfort us especially concerning those who are dear to us or associated with us in our path in life. They are living under the same dispensation of mercy as ourselves. If, then, like ourselves, they have their failings, and even if they are a cause of anxiety to us, let us remember God's tender and patient mercy. The thought of it will console us. Let us pray for them; and, as opportunity arises, let us advise or admonish them. For many years St. Monica mourned over her son Augustine,

while he was held in the bonds of sin. Hope in the Divine mercy sustained her. She prayed, and continued to pray, until her son was converted. Mercy came at last, and Augustine became a true convert. May it not be thus, too, with those for whom we pray ? We must not pray only for the living ; we must pray for the souls in purgatory. By a merciful dispensation there is a purgatory ; and our prayers and good works are accepted by God for the benefit of the souls therein detained. Purgatory teaches us another lesson in God's mercy, a lesson which affords us consolation when we think of our departed friends. We learn by it that the departed may expiate in the other world their lesser sins, and then attain to the heavenly reward.

Devout Christian, see in these considerations grounds for believing in God's mercy, and look for the fruits of mercy in the pardon, both in this life and in the next, of those sins which debar souls from entering Heaven. Beseech Mary, by her prayers, to obtain for you the grace to avail yourself with proper dispositions of the means of experiencing God's mercies and the consolations they afford.

March 7.

DANGEROUS OCCASIONS OF SIN.

I. The world exhibits the picture of frequent relapse into sin. How often, alas, sin continues after repentance! True repentance supposes and demands a certain after-conduct; it demands a determined effort to avoid relapse into sin, and the careful avoidance of the dangerous occasions of sin. God, in showing the sinner mercy and in bringing about his conversion, has done His part, and He demands that His mercy and His gifts shall not be abused. He insists upon a change of life. If this be not attempted by the repentant sinner, then does the sinner fail to fulfil the promises he made to God upon his repentance, and his conversion will not be lasting. All remedies against relapse into sin will be futile without the careful avoidance of voluntary occasions of sin—that is, without avoiding those dangerous occasions to which a man unnecessarily and wilfully exposes himself. If a man thus exposes himself to the danger of sin, what must be expected if not that he shall fall? The holy writer says: 'Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent; for if thou comest near them they will take hold of thee. The teeth thereof are the teeth of a lion, killing the souls of men' (Ecclus. xxi. 2, 3). Thus would the Holy Ghost instruct him, warn him, and guide him. But, seduced by a spirit of perversity, the converted sinner does not heed the loving Divine Voice that would fain save him, and he rushes again into the ways of destruction.

Devout Christian, look with horror upon the blind perversity with which men expose themselves to the proximate occasion of offending God, and of bringing upon themselves the terrible evil of mortal sin. Be on your guard in your own case against doing anything so perverse.

Persevere in your devotions and in dutifulness, that you may be protected from all evil by a special Providence.

II. To avoid the voluntary occasions of sin is a matter of strict obligation; in so much so, that a man who knowingly exposes himself to them thereupon and thereby commits sin. Particularly is this so when past experience has proved the danger of them. No effort or cost should be deemed too great to prevent relapse into sin, and therefore to avoid or put away these dangerous occasions of it. Our Lord says: 'If thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into Hell' (St. Mark ix. 42). The falls of Samson, David, and Solomon came of their not avoiding the occasions of sin. Thus, in the case of Samson, he saw that Dalila was false, and that she sought to put him in the power of his enemies, yet he still sought her company, and this led to his capture (Judg. xvi.). When there is question of the occasions of sin, any compromise will prove to be a delusion, and all pretexts and excuses should be viewed with suspicion. Man's surest guide is the Word of God, and his worst guides are his own perverse inclinations. The holy writer says: 'Go not in the way of ruin, and thou shalt not stumble against the stones: trust not thyself to a rugged way, lest thou set a stumbling-block to thy soul' (Ecclus. xxxii. 25); and 'He that loveth danger shall perish in it' (iii. 27). With these words of Holy Writ under their eyes, how can men excuse their conduct when they wilfully expose themselves to the danger of falling into sin?

Devout Christian, thank God for inspiring you with a sincere desire of avoiding sin. Be wise in dreading whatever might lead you to offend God. You are not of yourself wiser or stronger than many great men who have fallen into sin; therefore ever mistrust yourself, and do not expose yourself to danger, but ever pray to God for His help and protection.

III. When a repentant sinner, forgetting the mercy shown him, returns again to the company or places that were the occasion of his falls, he is like the Israelites who

returned to their idols. When they were under judges and had done this wicked thing, God said to them : ' I will deliver you no more.' But we read : ' The children of Israel said to the Lord : We have sinned, do Thou unto us whatsoever pleaseth Thee ; only deliver us this time. And saying these things they cast away out of their coasts all the idols of strange gods, and served the Lord their God : and He was touched with their miseries ' (Judg. x. 15, 16). So must the repentant sinner put away from him whatever has caused him to be unfaithful to God. Is it not question of preferring what is evil to what is good, and even to God Himself ? Until a right choice has been made and has been adhered to, the sincerity of the sinner's conversion may well be doubted. St. Paul says : ' Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are whom you obey, whether it be of sin, unto death, or of obedience, unto justice ' (Rom. vi. 16). God commands the sinner to put away the occasions of sin that he may effectually attain to justice. Will not the sinner obey ?

Devout Christian, you have happily chosen to fulfil all God's demands upon your service ; do not turn aside from the safe way. To become the servant of sin is to expose yourself to everlasting death. The occasions of sin are the pomps of Satan. Look up with confidence to holy Mary, and seek her protection and intercession. Ask her to obtain for you grace to persevere in the holy and happy path of God's service, and to shun all dangerous occasions of sin.

March 8.

LENTEN THOUGHTS : PENANCE.

I. Lent may be regarded as the season devoted to rendering satisfaction for sin. Holy Church places ashes on the heads of her children as a token of penance ; and in the Epistle read on Ash Wednesday she recalls the words of the prophet : 'Be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning' (Joel ii. 12). These words disclose the conditions upon which God of old was prepared to pardon the sin of His people. There should be, He told them, interior conversion of heart, and an exterior manifestation of it by works of penance. There will not be forgiveness unless there is repentance, and sorrow and self-denial are the truest tokens of repentance. In this we see the Christian view of penance, and it is the view the Church would impress on her children during the season of Lent. The conduct of the men of wicked Ninive is a reproach to that of unreal Christians who wish to escape from doing penance. We read : 'The men of Ninive believed in God : and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least. And the word came to the King of Ninive : and he rose up out of his throne, and cast away his robe from him, and was clothed with sackcloth, and sat in ashes' (Jonas iii. 5, 6).

Devout Christian, seek the way of true conversion, and set value upon the Lenten observances. The penance now imposed is neither so rigid nor so ample as in past times. Let not immortification nor indifference lead you to disregard what is prescribed for your observance. Unite your satisfactions with those offered by your Divine Saviour.

II. Worldly-minded Christians do not value works of penance. Is it because these works are disagreeable and unpalatable to their self-indulgent nature ? Do lovers

of ease, comfort, and pleasure, when they have sinned, pretend to follow a way of reconciliation which they deem more consistent with God's goodness and mercy? Do they hold that this consistency requires them merely to say that they are sorry for their sins? In their settlement of the matter they do not hold the balance evenly. They leave out of the scales the true character of their own malice when they sinned, the just measure of their indebtedness, and—what is of the greatest importance—the demands of Divine Justice. They speak of God's goodness and mercy; but they forget that these are displayed in the fact that God forgives them at all and upon any terms, that He pardons them so often, and that He makes the terms of reconciliation so easy. What view should be held of these terms when we compare the penance exacted with the dire penalties merited by our sins? These worldly-minded persons speak of God's goodness and mercy, but they seem to forget that His justice has its claims. Should we complain of penance being exacted when we take a proper view of the consequences of mortal sin? Man by mortal sin loses God's grace and incurs His wrath; his soul becomes spiritually impoverished, stained, and dead; he sets at naught Christ's sufferings and death; he loses all present merit; he parts with his right to Heaven and to a glorious immortality; and he exposes himself to suffer the everlasting punishment of Hell. Will not Divine Justice demand some penitential satisfaction when there is question of remedying so great an evil?

Devout Christian, let your mind be imbued with a right sense of the necessity of penance. Ask with David: 'Who can understand sins?' Ever extol God's mercy; but remember also His justice.

III. God said of old by His prophet: 'If the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all My commandments, and do judgment, and justice, living he shall live, and shall not die' (Ezech. xviii. 21). These words teach us the value of penance; it turns away the wrath of God, and reconciles us to Him. At the same time, they give us an insight into the malice of sin. We

read in the prophecy of Isaias: 'Your iniquities have divided between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you that He should not hear' (Isa. lix. 2). O sinners, why should God regard you with clemency when you have turned your back upon Infinite Goodness, and made yourselves odious to Infinite Holiness? When will you see the evil of sin? Has not God the faithful Angels in Heaven, ever true in their love and service, to do Him homage? What need has He of you, O sinners? Has He not also the just on earth, honouring Him by their meekness, charity, purity, humility, and patience? Why should He trouble Himself about you, O sinners, who have dishonoured Him by your many sins? Shall He leave you to your fate? Do you yourselves wish to be cast off for ever, and to share the doom of the damned? Ah, if sorrow and penance can save you, will you remain for ever perverse? 'A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise' (Ps. l. 19). See the path of a salutary penance.

Devout Christian, ever praise the unspeakable tenderness of God's compassion and the loving ways of His mercy; and take comfort from the acceptableness of sincere sorrow for sin. 'The sorrow that is according to God worketh penance steadfast unto salvation' (2 Cor. vii. 10). Beseech your heavenly, spotless Mother Mary to obtain for you the Christian spirit of compunction and penance.

March 9.

LENTEN THOUGHTS : SORROW.

I. Sorrow for sin should both prompt us to do penance and accompany it ; but let this sorrow be such as is acceptable to God. Some men are sorry only because of the punishment which will fall upon them on account of their sins, and they wish to escape it. This is a reasonable sorrow, but its motive is imperfect. It is imperfect because these men lose sight of what constitutes the malice of sin ; they consider the evils it brings upon themselves, and not the offence it offers to God. It is principally this offence which should be atoned for by sorrow ; we must be sorry for our sins because by them we have offended God. The evils falling upon ourselves should be only a secondary consideration. The miseries following sin may be the occasion of our repentance, but they must not be the leading motive of our sorrow. If we wish to spend the season of Lent profitably we should conceive confusion at the sight of all our past sins, and then, moved by sorrow for our many offences, we shall enter with becoming dispositions into the penitential practices of this holy season. Devout Christian, pray for the grace of a true spirit of compunction. Offer to God the pleasing homage of a contrite heart. Say to Him with David : ' To Thee only have I sinned, and have done evil before Thee.' Lament your baseness in having offended God, who is infinite goodness and love, and Who ever claims your love and gratitude ; and then will your sorrow be such as will be acceptable in His sight.

II. St. Peter said to the Jews, pointing out their sin against our Divine Saviour : ' You denied the Holy One and the Just . . . the Author of life you killed ' (Acts iii. 14, 15). As far as is in them, sinners also do this. When

they recognize the evil they have done, how shall they undo it? There is only one way to reconciliation with God, and this way is pointed out by St. Peter, who went on to say to the Jews: 'Be penitent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out' (Acts iii. 19). How thankful we should be that God may be propitiated, and how readily we should fulfil the conditions of receiving forgiveness! Sincere sorrow for sin will merit God's pardon. In the case of mortal sin, forgiveness must be sought through the Sacrament of Penance; and this holy sacrament cannot be validly received without sorrow for sin. We must either do penance when we have sinned, or we must bear the punishment of our sins: there is no middle course. Sometimes men's tears are in vain. When they are caused by some temporal loss or calamity, they cannot remedy the evil which gives rise to them. But when men shed tears of sorrow for sin they are always profitable. The tears of Mary Magdalen and of St. Peter were the means of obtaining our Lord's forgiveness. Let this consideration move us to sincere sorrow.

Devout Christian, you desire to live in peace with God. Ever, and daily, regret your sins; true sorrow will remove their guilt, and the burden of them, from your soul. Pray daily for forgiveness: 'Forgive us our trespasses.' Say with David: 'Hear my prayer, O Lord, and my supplication: give ear to my tears. . . . Oh, forgive me, that I may be refreshed, before I go hence, and be no more' (Ps. xxxviii. 13, 14). True peace will be the fruit of true compunction.

III. Let not sadness accompany our sorrow for sin. Sadness is not one of the gifts of Heaven, as is the supernatural sorrow which brings us reconciliation with God. Sadness is bitter and unprofitable; but not so that sorrow which shall be turned into joy, and which, as a holy writer says, is the precursor of the most blessed repose. If, as our Lord assures us, 'there shall be joy before the Angels of God upon one sinner doing penance' (St. Luke xv. 10), the sinner himself will not be denied the comfort of spiritual joy and satisfaction in the hour of his repentance. Sadness

would tend to sour the sweet fruits of true repentance. It should comfort us to recall the love our Lord manifested for penitents. How forcibly this love is impressed on our mind by the parable of the Good Shepherd, who, when he had found the lost sheep, laid it upon his shoulders, rejoicing, and went home and called his friends to come and rejoice with him! Similar was the conduct of the father of the prodigal son: he ran to meet his repentant son, and received him with every mark of affection and joy. Can we reasonably say, then, that our Lord wishes penitent sinners to be sad? These penitents realize our Lord's promise: 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' Divine mercy as a soothing balm heals the spiritual wounds of the soul, which is thereupon consoled with a sense of pardon received and of peace restored. Tokens of God's love and bounty will follow, and the soul, having been brought back to spiritual life, will become strong again in grace.

Devout Christian, be comforted by the thought of God's mercy. How precious must be that sorrow which draws the generous display of infinite mercy! Be ever animated with the sentiments and desires of the penitent David, and pray that you may be ever true to grace: 'Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and strengthen me with a perfect spirit' (Ps. l. 14). Ask your heavenly Mother Mary to obtain for you both true sorrow for sin, and a sincere and constant hatred of it. Precious in God's sight will your sorrow be if prompted by your love of Him and by the displeasure sin has caused Him.

March 10.

LENTEN THOUGHTS: FASTING.

I. Fasting is not only a Christian ordinance, coming down from the time of Christ Himself and the Apostles; it was an ordinance also of the Old Law, employed to propitiate God (2 Par. xx. 3; 1 Esdr. viii. 21; 2 Mach. xiii, 12; Joel i. 14, etc.). Our Lord fasted in the desert, and He taught His disciples to fast, saying: 'When you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad' (St. Matt. vi. 16). He, moreover, foretold that His followers should fast, when He said: 'The days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast' (St. Matt. ix. 15). Holy Church, our guide and teacher in the affairs of the soul, imposes on her children laws of fasting and abstinence. The Saints have carried their practice of fasting far beyond what these laws demand; and this ought to be a lesson to us concerning the great value of fasting. Its value was clearly declared by the Archangel Raphael, when he said to Tobias: 'Prayer is good with fasting and alms, more than to lay up treasures of gold' (Tob. xii. 8). How foolish, then, are those persons who say that fasting is uncalled for, being an unprofitable work of supererogation! And how wanting in the true spirit of Christian discipline are those who fail to fast, who disregard the precept of the Church which imposes the practice of fasting and abstinence! The Lenten fast comes down from the earliest Christian times, and it has been universally practised for many centuries.

Devout Christian, fulfil according to circumstances what is prescribed by the Church concerning the Lenten fast. Enter at least into the spirit of this Lenten observance, if your circumstances do not permit a full compliance with the letter of the law.

II. Christians should recognize the value of corporal

penances. The discipline of the body corrects its unruly tendencies, and tends to moderate its too lively or impassioned activities. It removes various obstacles to spiritual development, and helps to dispose the mind for prayer and spiritual effort. It is also a remedy against sin in general, but especially against intemperance and impurity. Finally, it proceeds from an act of the will, which manifests a religious disposition and a desire to please God; and this disposition and this desire bring upon the soul God's blessings and various spiritual fruits. Holy Church, in the Lenten preface at Mass, tells us that fasting lifts up the mind and is fruitful in virtue and rewards. We learn from Biblical incidents, as in the case of the Ninevites, that it averts God's anger from sinners. Let us remember that penance is a Divine law, imposed for our correction, and as a source of much good in many ways to us; and that fasting is one of the works of this salutary penance. We ought therefore to value it and to practise it. If, however, through ill-health, the nature of our employment, or other circumstances, we are unable to fast, we should not neglect to supply for this inability by assisting at the public services of the Church, by private practices of devotion, or by performing some of the spiritual or corporal works of mercy.

Devout Christian, let mortification of the body have its due place in your observance of Lent, so as thereby to testify to your desire to appease God's anger and to offer some pleasing satisfaction for your sins. Let King David's example instruct you and encourage you. He says: 'As for me . . . I was clothed with hair-cloth. I humbled my soul with fasting' (Ps. xxxiv. 13).

III. We must not be so inconsistent as to believe that exterior penances will be acceptable to God if they be not accompanied by interior dispositions of compunction and desire of amendment. The holy writer says: 'So a man that fasteth for his sins, and doth the same again, what doth his humbling himself profit him?' (Ecclus. xxxiv. 31). God says by His prophet: 'Is not this rather the fast that I have chosen? Loose the bands of wickedness, undo the bundles that oppress. . . . Deal thy bread to the hungry'

(Isa. lviii. 6, 7). He demands the practice of good works. It is not enough only to mortify ourselves if at the same time we neglect the works of mercy, if we leave our neighbour in want or under oppression. God goes on to say: 'When thou shalt pour out thy soul to the hungry, and shalt satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise up in darkness and thy darkness shall be as the noon-day.' The prophet says: 'Now therefore saith the Lord: Be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting and in weeping, and in mourning. And rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God' (Joel ii. 12, 13). Happy are those Christians who merit God's gracious regard by the religious performance of penitential works. Their pious dispositions afford a consoling assurance of perseverance in well-doing, and their exterior acts of self-denial tend to foster these dispositions, and to put a seal on their fidelity.

Devout Christian, examine and see if you duly, according to your ability and according to your circumstances, practise Christian mortification, and if with all your heart you turn away from everything that is displeasing to God. Do you to mortification add the practice of works of mercy according as occasion may offer? Ask Mary, your heavenly Patroness, to obtain for you a right understanding concerning the penitential aspect of a sincere Christian life.

March 11.

LENTEN THOUGHTS : THE PASSION.

I. Christians, turn during Lent to the scenes of our Saviour's sacred sufferings—scenes enacted before the glorious event of the Resurrection. Our Lord said : ' Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so enter into His glory ?' (St. Luke xxiv. 26). It is becoming that during this holy season we should be in spirit with Him in the hours of His sorrows. In this we shall not find sadness, but it will be to us fruitful in comfort. Where should we be found while holy Church puts before us the theme of our Saviour's various sufferings ? Let us ask our own hearts. Our Lord said : ' Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also ' (St. Luke xii. 34). What do we see in the case of Mary Magdalen ? When our Lord was reclining at the banquet in Simon's house Mary Magdalen was there at His sacred feet ; while He was seated in the house at Bethany, and Martha was ministering to His wants, Mary was again at His feet ; and when at last He was hanging on the Cross, Mary was there too, and again at His sacred feet. Might she not say : ' I sat down under His shadow whom I desired ' (Cant. ii. 3) ; and might she not go on to say : ' And His fruit was sweet to my palate ' ? Perhaps we regard her with a holy envy, tasting, as she did, the sweetness of our Lord's consideration for her and of the delight of His presence. What is said of Wisdom might truly be said of our Lord : ' His conversation hath no bitterness, nor His company any tediousness, but joy and gladness ' (Wisd. viii. 16).

Devout Christian, you will find consolation in being with our Lord in spirit, even in the scenes of His Passion. Reflect on these words : ' If you partake of the suffering of

Christ, rejoice that when His glory shall be revealed you may also be glad with exceeding joy' (1 St. Pet. iv. 13).

II. If we say with the Spouse in the Canticles, 'I will seek Him whom my soul loveth' (Cant. iii. 2), where shall we find our beloved Saviour at this holy season? We must look for Him in His sacred Passion and on the Cross. There let us sit down under His shadow. He is declared to be the 'Corn of the elect' (Zach. ix. 17); but the corn is not now standing erect, golden in appearance, and gladdened by the summer sun. No; it is bent by the stormy wind, and the sky is overcast. It is the season of the Passion. The corn will soon be cut down, and the grain will be winnowed and crushed. Our Lord is the True Vine; but the juice of the grape is not now tasted in the 'city of joy' (Jer. xlix. 25). The precious Blood is shed outside the walls. Now should we look upon Jesus on the Cross, His beautiful, loving Hands outstretched for us. Drawn by sympathy, gratitude, and love, we should take our stand in spirit under the shadow of that Cross with its Divine burden nailed to it, to study the open wounds and the flowing of the Blood. Our study will impress on our minds the truth of St. Paul's words: 'You are bought with a great price' (1 Cor. vi. 20). O deep and wonderful mystery of man's redemption! O unfathomable love of God for man!

Devout Christian, welcome with pious affection this holy season, which will recall to your mind the scenes of Christ's sufferings for you. This season and these sacred scenes should stir up your devotion, should inspire you with desire to atone for your sins, and should attract you to direct your steps in the ways of holy living. During these days of Lent turn your thoughts often to our Lord in His sacred Passion, and this will help you to sanctify them.

III. Christians see in our Lord's most cruel sufferings the most consoling token of His love. From all His sacred wounds come, as it were, so many voices saying: 'See how I have loved you!' As a fruit of the holy Passion we should feel inspired with confidence in our salvation; for we know that our Lord does not wish to lose the fruits of

so much suffering. If we are lost, the fault will be entirely our own. Another fruit should be a sincere hatred of sin, for we recognize that sin was the cause of Christ's sufferings and death: 'He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins' (Isa. liii. 5); 'Christ also died once for our sins, the Just for the unjust' (1 St. Pet. iii. 18). Let us conceive a lasting hatred for every kind of moral defilement; for sin, which demanded so exorbitant and cruel a satisfaction must be the greatest possible of all evils. Finally, another fruit of the holy Passion should be to teach us patience under our little crosses, and to reconcile us to the various trials and sufferings which are incident to our present life. Let not the lessons of the Passion be lost upon us. St. Peter says: 'If doing well you suffer patiently, this is thanksworthy before God. For unto this are you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps' (1 St. Pet. ii. 20, 21).

Devout Christian, desire for yourself these various fruits of devotion to our Lord's sacred Passion. Strive during this Lent to acquire a truer Christian spirit and to tread with firmer step the path of self-denial, piety, and duty. Beseech Mary, the silent witness of her Divine Son's sufferings, to obtain for you a practical and profitable devotion to the holy Passion.

March 12.

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN.

I. Our Lord wishes us to commemorate His sacred sufferings. Their first stage was in the Garden of Olives. Our Lord had just instituted the sacrament of His Body and Blood, and given the priestly power of Consecration to His Apostles. He had addressed to these Apostles words full of love and Divine consideration; and He had then prayed to His Father as only He could pray. A hymn had followed (St. Mark xiv. 26), and then all went forth into the night. A change then came over our Saviour. The sweetness of His holy countenance gave place to sorrow and sadness (St. Matt. xxvi. 37). St. Mark says: 'He began to fear and to be heavy.' To Peter, James, and John He said: 'My soul is sorrowful even unto death; stay you here, and watch.' His feelings overcame Him. He went forward a little way, and then fell flat on the ground. We contemplate the scene with awe and deep sympathy. Why was all this? What had brought Him low? Listen to Isaias: 'The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all' (liii. 6). O countless sins of men! O sins of our own! You oppress the Divine Redeemer with unutterable anguish.

Devout Christian, thank the loving and generous Heart of your Saviour for undertaking to atone for your many sins. Jesus stands out alone to bear the sins of all mankind. We apply to Him the words of the prophet: 'I have trodden the wine-press alone' (Isa. lxiii. 3). O admirable lesson of Divine love and mercy!

II. In His agony in the Garden, our Lord prayed. The prayer was short and earnest; both in manner and in matter it was a model prayer. The words of it were: 'My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from

Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' We must in our afflictions turn to God, and pray that His will may be done. It did not please the Heavenly Father to take from our Lord the chalice of His Passion; but, as St. Luke tells us, there presently 'appeared to Him an Angel from Heaven, strengthening Him' (xxii. 43). For the wisest of reasons God may not always remove from us the causes of our afflictions, but He will give us grace to bear them patiently. He will strengthen and comfort us under them. Our Lord interrupted His prayer to visit His disciples. He found them sleeping, and He put them on their guard. Then a second and a third time He prayed, using the same form of prayer. His anguish in the meantime continued; and 'being in an agony, He prayed the longer.' He teaches us not to desist from prayer, even when we seem not to be heard. Perseverance is a test of earnestness.

Devout Christian, study the lessons taught by your loving Saviour in His agony in the Garden. Be willing to drink with Him of the chalice of suffering when it pleases God to present it to you; but, because human infirmity is great, pray earnestly to God to give you strength and patience.

III. The anguish of our Lord's soul was made manifest in a wonderful way in His sacred body. St. Luke says: 'His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground.' There were many causes which contributed to our Lord's anguish. Not only did He see the terrible sufferings and death that were before Him, but His most holy soul was weighed down by the sight of the magnitude of the world's wickedness, and of men's ingratitude, and by the knowledge of the profitlessness of His expiation to the countless host of the reprobate. He may have said in that bitter hour: 'What profit is there in My Blood?' (Ps. xxix. 10). Although overwhelmed with sorrow, our Lord did not give way to discouragement. When His prayer was done, He said to His slumbering disciples: 'The hour is come: behold the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go. Behold, he

that will betray Me is at hand' (St. Mark xiv. 41, 42). When we have committed ourselves into God's hands in our trials, we must manifest our faith and confidence by our fortitude and constancy.

Devout Christian, when you have carried your sorrow to the feet of your Heavenly Father, you may say with David: 'Let me not be confounded, O Lord, for I have called upon Thee' (Ps. xxx. 18). When you feel oppressed with sorrow, say to yourself that your sins demand all you suffer, and that your anguish cannot be compared with that of your loving Saviour. Ask Mary to obtain for you grace to be resigned to your passing afflictions, and above all to avoid sin, which would merit the punishments of God's anger.

March 13.

FIRST SCENES IN THE SACRED PASSION.

I. The Sacred Heart of our Saviour experienced a painful rebuff in the conduct of His disciples. During the hour of His prayer and agony in the Garden of Olives, His chosen disciples, appointed to watch, gave way to sleep. Peter had said: 'Lord, I am ready to go with Thee into prison and to death' (St. Luke xxii. 33). How soon his fervour had died away! When our Lord had prayed the first time, He returned to the three chosen disciples, and He found them asleep. He said to Peter: 'What? Could you not watch one hour with Me? Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak.' We see how gentle was His rebuke, and how He even strove to excuse the remissness of the disciples. A second time our Lord came to His disciples, and again they were asleep; 'and they knew not what to answer Him' (St. Mark xiv. 40). When He returned the third time, He said to them: 'Sleep ye now and take your rest.' Our Lord did not deal harshly with them; and after their repentance they became bold witnesses to His Name and champions of the Faith.

Devout Christian, be not among those who disappoint our Lord in His expectations of fidelity. Note the Divine advice to watch and pray. Learn, too, not to take scandal when you meet with remissness where there ought to be much fervour. Amendment may follow, and may be succeeded by great works done for God.

II. When our Lord's prayer was finished, another of the disciples arrived on the scene. This was Judas. Satan had entered into this disciple's heart. Judas determined to betray his Divine Master for money, and he received thirty pieces of silver to do the thing. He allowed himself

no peace until he had accomplished his villainy. Do the wicked realize how debased they are? The prophet says: 'The wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest, and the waves thereof cast up dirt and mire. There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord God' (Isa. lvii. 20, 21). The betrayal was accomplished in a most outrageous manner. Judas was accompanied by a vast multitude with swords and clubs. Addressing the most savage of these enemies of Christ, he said: 'Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is He, hold Him fast.' Our Lord's words to His false disciple were disregarded. The betrayal was followed by the cruel seizure and binding of our Lord, and by the flight of Peter and the other disciples. Reflecting upon these events, we see how sinners are not stayed in their wicked conduct by any consideration, how their viciousness of purpose causes them to be oblivious of past favours received, and how they do not weigh the terrible punishments which they bring upon themselves. We see how our Lord warned and advised the disciples, how He strove to win back Judas, and how gently and meekly He bore Himself. Yet how different a turn matters might have taken, had He so willed! 'Thinkest thou,' He said to one of the disciples, 'that I cannot ask My Father, and He will give Me presently more than twelve legions of Angels?' (St. Matt. xxvi. 53).

Devout Christian, beware of the deceits of Satan. This Evil Spirit has led astray, not only Judas, but many men who had been richly blessed by God. Seek rather the company of the few who are just than that of the many who are worldly and irreligious. Compassionate our Lord, Whom sinners despise and abandon, to follow the bent of their evil inclinations.

III. The next scenes in the sacred Passion were transacted at the houses of Annas and Caiphas. While before Annas, replying to questions that were put, Jesus was struck a savage blow in the face by one of the servants standing by. There was no one to condemn this cruelty—perhaps our Lord's enemies approved of it; for Jesus took up His own defence, and said: 'If I have spoken evil, give testi-

mony of the evil: but if well, why strikest thou Me?' (St. John xviii. 23). While in the court of Caiphas, our Lord was subjected to further questioning and to many outrages. He was mocked, struck, blindfolded, spit upon, and derided. He was treated as the plaything of the diabolical cruelty of the servants. Yet this was Jesus Who had instructed them in the Temple, Who had healed their sick and afflicted, and Who had gone about amongst them doing good. This was Jesus, Whom they had greeted only a few days previously with shouts of joy and triumph, saying: 'Blessed be the King Who cometh in the Name of the Lord, peace in Heaven, and glory on high' (St. Luke xix. 38). The perversity of the wicked is attended by blindness and ingratitude. Jesus, in His character of Saviour, bears with outrages which in His character of Supreme Judge He must one day condemn and punish. The scene will yet be changed. After David had said: 'The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together, against the Lord, and against His Christ,' he went on to say: 'He that dwelleth in Heaven shall laugh at them. . . . Then shall He speak to them in His anger, and trouble them in His rage' (Ps. ii. 2-5).

Devout Christian, contemplate with loving sympathy your Saviour in the torments of His sacred Passion, and admire His patience and His devotedness to man's salvation. Ask Mary, the Mother of our Saviour, to obtain for you grace to avoid self-indulgence, and to enter more earnestly into the true spirit of Christian mortification.

March 14.

OUR LORD SCOURGED.

I. The scourging of our Lord at a pillar succeeded the infamous treatment to which He had been subjected before Annas, and in the hall of Caiphas. It would, however, seem to have been the first punishment judicially inflicted. The scourging was unjust, and it was most cruel. Our Lord foretold that He would be subjected to this outrage; for He said: 'All things shall be accomplished . . . concerning the Son of Man. For He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon. And after they have scourged Him, they will put Him to death' (St. Luke xviii. 31-33; St. Matt. xx. 19; St. Mark x. 34). When Herod had sent our Lord back to Pilate, this weak and timorous judge, having declared that nothing had been proved to show our Lord in any way guilty, said to the assembled Jews (St. Luke xxiii. 16): 'I will chastise Him therefore, and release Him.' Upon this the multitude demanded that Barabbas should be released to them, and that Jesus should be crucified. 'So Pilate being willing to satisfy the people, released to them Barabbas, and delivered up Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified' (St. Mark xv. 15). Why should Jesus have been sentenced to be scourged, and to be put to death, when Pilate had declared Him innocent? Do we not see that the innocent Jesus bore our iniquities, and that He was scourged because of them?

Devout Christian, thank your loving Saviour for having taken your place under the scourges which should have fallen on you. Offer to God your Saviour's sufferings to satisfy for your many sins, and renew your detestation of every kind of sin.

II. Our Lord is no longer in honour. The Hosannas

of His once enthusiastic followers have died away, and are heard no more. Cowardice has seized upon the boldest of His friends, and He is abandoned to the cruellest of fates. Now may He say: 'But I am a worm, and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people' (Ps. xxi. 7). 'Then, therefore, Pilate took Jesus, and scourged Him' (St. John xix. 1). It is generally believed that the stripes our Lord received were greatly in excess of the number which might have legally been given. He was bound by cords to the short column used for the administration of this ignominious chastisement; and fast and heavily came the blows upon His uncovered back and side and arms. Probably the soldiers, or lictors, struck Him wherever they pleased, and wherever they deemed they could cause the greatest pain. The precious Blood of the Divine Victim was drawn by the lashes from the lacerated flesh, flying off and around, sprinkling the ground and walls of the hall in which the column of flagellation stood. St. Augustine describes how at last the cords were cut by one of the lictors, and how Jesus fell to the ground, weltering in His Blood. This act was inspired seemingly through a sense of horror at the cruelty and injustice of the punishment inflicted, but really that the Divine decrees concerning our Lord's crucifixion might be fulfilled; for the excessive scourging was so barbarous as to threaten our Lord's life.

Devout Christian, compassionate your loving Saviour enduring all this suffering and ignominy for your sake. Do you wish always to be in honour and without molestation? If suffering comes to you, bear it for our Lord's sake, and offer it for your sins.

III. Whether we take into consideration the delicate complexion of our Lord's sacred Body, so sensitive to pain, or the cruelty with which the rough soldiers scourged Him, we must conclude that our Lord suffered intensely under this barbarous punishment. Let us then admire the proof of His love of us which He thereby gave. He loved us, and delivered Himself for us (Eph. v. 2). He deemed no suffering too great to be endured for our sake.

The outrages heaped upon Him began at His being seized in the Garden, and they continued until His sacred Side was pierced by the lance of the centurion. Let us admire, too, His patience. Excessive as the physical pain was under the scourging, and intense as was the anguish of His soul caused by the injustice, cruelty, ingratitude, and hatred, of which He was the victim, our Lord did not expostulate or complain. He bore everything in silence. What a model of patience! Yet men who have sinned grievously, and deserve the terrible punishments incurred by their wickedness, murmur and complain under every little trial or suffering which God sends them! Looking upon our loving Saviour scourged so cruelly, let us recognize the malice of sin. We may ask, with David: 'Who can understand sins?' (Ps. xviii. 13). Persistent sinners, refusing mercy, deepening their malice as far as in them lies, add to the grief of their Saviour's wounds (Ps. lxviii. 27).

Devout Christian, join with all earnest Christians in commemorating our Lord's sacred Passion with sentiments of love and compunction. Be not a stranger to practices of penance and self-denial. Their fruit is needed in your struggle against what is evil, and in your effort to advance in virtue. Ask Mary to obtain for you grace to profit by the lessons taught by her Divine Son's sufferings.

March 15.

THE CROWNING WITH THORNS

I. When 'the chief priests, and magistrates of the temple, and the ancients,' accompanied by a multitude, sought to apprehend our Lord after His agony in the Garden, He said to them: 'This is your hour, and the power of darkness' (St. Luke xxii. 53). The truth of these words was seen in the savage treatment to which our Lord was afterwards subjected. How will His tormentors crown that sacred brow, which was the seat of heavenly wisdom and the bright light of imperishable rectitude? If they have no rich diadem worthy to encircle it, let them leave it unadorned; for it will yet inspire all beholders with reverence and admiration. No; they did not wish this. They must crush and disfigure that sacred brow. As a most cruel invention, a crown of thorns is suggested; and forthwith one is prepared. Its thorns are many, and they are long and sharp, and as hard as steel. 'Platting a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head' (St Matt. xxvii. 29). It is written: 'Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see King Solomon in the diadem wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the joy of his heart' (Cant. iii. 11). But here Jesus, who was more than a Solomon, is now in the day of His sorrows. He is undergoing torments that are only preliminary to the final cruelty of His crucifixion. The prophecy is fulfilled: 'Many dogs have encompassed Me: the council of the malignant hath besieged Me' (Ps. xxi. 17).

Devout Christian, embrace in spirit that sacred brow encircled with the thorny crown. Soothe its sufferings with words of sorrow, love, and sympathy. Offer your own guilty brow to take the cruel crown.

II. The cruel crown encircled the sacred head of our loving Saviour; but His savage tormentors were not satisfied. They thought the thorns had not been driven in deep enough. We read in the Holy Gospel: 'And spitting upon Him, they took the reed, and struck His head' (St. Matt. xxvii. 30). They drove the thorns deeply in, and this caused the blood to flow more copiously, and it intensified the suffering. Our Lord's interior suffering even exceeded the bodily pains caused by the thorns, for He was conscious of the grievous outrage offered to His Divine Sovereignty. He had been crowned in derision and in mockery. The Gospel records the event in these words: 'They put a scarlet cloak about Him. And platting a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand. And bowing the knee, they mocked Him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews.' How harrowing this was to our Lord's sense of His own dignity and majesty! And how painful it was to Him to receive this indignity from His own creatures, whom He was nourishing with the countless blessings of His Divine providence! Great as were His bodily and mental sufferings caused by this cruel crowning, our Lord uttered no protest and bore all in silence. His face was covered with streaks of fresh blood flowing from the wounds, and His hair was clotted with blood. We see realized what was prophesied by Isaias: 'There is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness: and we have seen Him, and there was no sightliness. . . . Despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows' (Isa. liii. 2, 3).

Devout Christian, adore your Divine Saviour; acknowledge His supreme, universal, and everlasting Sovereignty. Willingly accept for yourself now the crown of thorns He would place upon your brow, that it may hereafter be exchanged for an everlasting crown of heavenly glory.

III. The thorns of that cruel crown represented the pangs of sin to be expiated by our Saviour's sufferings. They were many and sharp, because the sins of mankind are many and grievous. Who shall be able to say how intense was our Lord's hatred of sin? Yet He bore all

our sins and satisfied for them. With one arm He embraced the whole multitude of the sins of men, and with the other arm the whole scope of the satisfaction demanded by God's justice. O compassionate and generous love! Christians should learn from the contemplation of their loving Saviour crowned with thorns to despise the lustre of earthly glory, and to embrace the portion of suffering and of contempt which may fall to them in this life. Let them study to be humble and patient when they are despised. Let them not place another thorny crown on our Lord's sacred head by sins of thought, to cause again cruel wounds by thoughts of pride, envy, impurity, or revenge. Let them rather expiate any such sinful thoughts by those penitential tears and tokens of repentance which might soothe the sufferings of our Lord's sacred brow. Let them not by any perverse wilfulness lose the crown of glory prepared for them. Our Lord says to them, as to the Bishop of Philadelphia: 'Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown' (Apoc. iii. 11).

Devout Christian, conceive a firm hope of being crowned with glory and honour hereafter, provided that you are willing to share our Lord's crown of thorns now. Beseech Mary, your heavenly Queen, to obtain for you the grace to be faithful to her Divine Son under all circumstances: 'By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report' (2 Cor. vi. 8); and to bear with Christian fortitude the sufferings God may send you.

March 16.

'THEY BLASPHEMED HIM, WAGGING THEIR HEADS.'

I. OUR Divine Saviour was in His last agony on the Cross when wicked men, ceasing now to add wounds upon His Body, pierced His Sacred Heart with cruel arrows of blasphemous, taunting, and mocking words. 'They that passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads' (St. Matt. xxvii. 39). Behold the spectacle. Jesus Christ, the Divine Son of the Eternal Father, the innocent Lamb of God, is suffering death like the basest of criminals. He was without reproach, and the men who scoffed at Him were sinners. The prophet foretold of Him: 'He hath done no iniquity, neither was there deceit in His mouth' (Isa. liii. 9). St. Matthew says: 'The chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus, that they might put Him to death: And they found not.' Judas, who had betrayed Him, declared our Lord's innocence, saying: 'I have sinned, in betraying innocent blood.' Pilate, who saw plainly that the Jews were actuated by envy, declared repeatedly that he found no cause in our Lord; and he washed his hands before the people, saying: 'I am innocent of the blood of this just man.' Herod, too, found no reason for passing any sentence against Him. And the very thieves on Calvary proclaimed our Lord's innocence; for one of them said to the other: 'We receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done no evil.' O wretched men, who blaspheme the Lord of glory (1 Cor. ii. 8), what has blinded your eyes and steeled your hearts that you should thus rail against your most gentle Saviour? Alas, you left Calvary unconverted and in your sins: if you died in your wickedness, you are now among the reprobate in everlasting torments.

Devout Christian, pour into the Sacred Heart the balm

of your fervent love. Repair the injury these blasphemers sought to do by your words of love, praise, and gratitude. Be appalled at the terrible fate of unrepentant sinners.

II. Perhaps some Christians, forgetful of God's long-suffering, when they recall this scene of blasphemy and railing against our dying Saviour, may say: How strange it was that these wicked and heartless blasphemers should have escaped God's wrath and punishment! If that was God upon the Cross, and if they who wagged their heads at Him, blaspheming Him, were His creatures, why were they allowed to do so with impunity? How little do these Christians understand the ways of God! Those blasphemers themselves may have reasoned in this way; and seeing that no evil befell them, they may have gone on their way, thinking as they went that they had no cause for alarm. God has His times. That hour was not one for retribution and punishment, but one of mercy, as it was one of satisfaction to God's justice to effect man's reconciliation. Punishment would have been out of place in that hour of man's redemption. Let us learn from God's long-suffering with those blasphemers that He does not always punish with sudden and peremptory justice those who slight Him. Even when the outrage offered to His Divine and Sovereign Majesty is very great, He abides His time. This should not lead sinners to repeat their offences or to continue in their sins, but it should rather move them to enter into themselves and to seek to escape from the wrath that will surely come if they remain impenitent.

Devout Christian, pray often for the conversion of sinners and often repent of your own past sins. We read in Ecclesiasticus: 'My son, hast thou sinned? Do so no more, but for thy former sins also pray that they may be forgiven thee' (xxi. 1); 'The way of sinners is made plain with stones, and in their end is Hell, and darkness, and pains' (xxi. 11). Only repentance can save them from this end.

III. There are still on earth men who wag their heads. These are sinners, particularly those of whom St. Jude

wrote, saying : 'These men blaspheme whatever things they know not' (i. 10). There are men who make little of the saving truths of the Faith. They, as it were, impiously wag their heads before the majesty of Divine Truth. There are men who break God's law freely and as it pleases them. They, as it were, wag their heads before the sacredness of the Divine Commands. There are men who scoff at the mysteries and sacred rites of religion, and others who are heedless about fulfilling those duties of religion which bind under grave obligation. The Apostles foretold 'that in the last time there should come mockers, walking according to their own desires in ungodliness' (St. Jude i. 18). Finally, there are men like the sinner of whom Solomon says : 'The wicked man, when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth' (Prov. xviii. 3), and who, impiously misconstruing God's long-suffering, says : 'I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me ?' (Ecclus. v. 4). They in their folly wag their heads in presence of the dire punishments that hang over them. Oh, when will sinners turn in confusion, humility, and sorrow from the ways of evil in which the soul meets only with misery, alarm, and spiritual desolation, and seek the path of grace, virtue, and religion, in which are experienced comfort, peace, and spiritual joy ? God invites them, saying : 'Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day' (Ecclus. v. 8).

Devout Christian, strive to make reparation for the blasphemies by which God is so often outraged and for the ingratitude of hardened sinners. Ask Mary to obtain for you the grace ever to experience the salutary influence of religion upon your life and dispositions. Be grateful to God, who has drawn you in the ways of piety and virtue.

March 17.

ST. PATRICK.

I. The Church in every land gives special honour to the Apostle who brought the light of the true Christian faith to its people. The Catholic instincts and sentiments of the Irish people lead them to a very marked and admirable devotion to St. Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland. God prepared this Saint for his Apostolic work by severe trials. He was only sixteen years of age when he was carried off into Ireland as a captive, and made to serve a hard master. During his six years' captivity he suffered much from cold, and from many privations while taking care of the flocks. These sufferings, far from causing him to murmur at his sad lot, led him to have constant recourse to God in fervent prayer. They did not suffice for his religious ardour, and he added to them various penitential practices. We are told that he strove to atone for some fault committed when he was fifteen years of age—the fault is said to have been one of using some objectionable expression. God was all the time chastening his beautiful soul, and fixing the stamp of remarkable virtue upon his character. Piety, self-denial, ardour, and courage are the virtues which distinguish apostolic men.

Devout Christian, admire the secret and wonderful ways of God in leading them to sanctity. Some men become Saints in rough and difficult walks in life and others in seclusion in the cloister. Learn to turn to your spiritual benefit the opportunities afforded you, whether occasions of piety and of doing good, or others of bearing sufferings and cares.

II. After a second captivity of two months, St. Patrick returned to his parents. It was while with them that he had a vision of Irish children holding up their hands to

him and seeking his help. This vision decided his vocation. He went to various seats of learning, and made his preparation for the glorious mission of carrying the faith to Ireland. Although consecrated Bishop when forty-five years of age, it would appear that he was sixty years old when he landed in Ireland to fulfil his apostolic mission. He met with opposition and with extraordinary difficulties, but nothing daunted his ardour or stayed his zeal. God bestowed upon his servant the power of working miracles, a power he used throughout his Divinely appointed career. His life was sought upon many occasions, but God saved him in wonderful ways from the hands of his enemies. St. Patrick's progress through Ireland was marked by many conversions. Chieftains gave sites for churches, and the Saint established a clergy, and instructed and consecrated Bishops. Many holy virgins were vowed to God, and finally the foundations of schools of learning were laid. Ireland soon merited to be called the Island of Saints.

Devout Christian, see in all this the work of God's mercy and grace. The zeal, piety, and mortifications of St. Patrick merited this success to his work. Like a good husbandman, he did not spare himself in the sowing season, and God blessed his labours and gave the abundant harvest. Now is your seed-time ; use it well, and with God's blessing you will reap abundantly.

III. After his first slow and careful progress through Ireland, St. Patrick revisited the various provinces to confirm his converts in their religious fervour, and to further strengthen the apostolic works already established. He practised at all times severe austerities, and he devoted much time to prayer. He gave only a third of the night to his much-needed rest, which he took upon a stone slab or on the ground, and the other two-thirds he spent in reciting the Psalms. He observed perpetual abstinence from the time of his beginning his preparation for the priesthood until his death. Worn out with labour, he went to his heavenly reward at the age of 120 years. We have to admire St. Patrick's eminent faith, piety, humility, self-denial, and zeal; also his love of the race he

evangelized and the wonders he accomplished. His work remains. Faith and piety flourish in Ireland. Great Saints have been produced there. Ireland has had her martyrs. Heresy and oppression have not stamped out the religion of her people. Irish priests and people have carried the faith into many lands.

Devout Christian, thank God for all these fruits of St. Patrick's labours. Recommend yourself to St. Patrick's prayers, and seek to do honour to this glorious Apostle of Ireland. His name will live from generation to generation, and the Church will ever declare his praise (Ecclus. xliv. 15). Beg through Mary's prayers the grace of a firm faith and constant piety. Let not the seeds of grace lie idle in you, but strive that they may yield in you fruits of sanctity.

March 18.

ST. JOSEPH—I.

I. Catholics honour St. Joseph as the foster-father of our Divine Lord, as the spouse of Mary, as the patron of the universal Church. Some countries have adopted him as their special patron. How exalted was the calling of this great Saint! It is written: 'He that is the keeper of his master shall be glorified' (Prov. xxvii. 18). The Eternal Father committed to St. Joseph the care of His own Divine Son. Let the Angelic Host stand in awe when they contemplate St. Joseph's dignity and charge. Their Lord is placed under the guardianship and control of this eminent Saint. Jesus loves and obeys St. Joseph, and receives from his hands the necessaries of life. Jesus honours him, lives with him, and works under his directions. If we ask: 'Who is the faithful and wise steward whom his Lord setteth over His family?' (St. Luke xii. 42), we must answer that it is St. Joseph. It was he who should by Divine command give Jesus His sweet and adorable Name; for the Angel said to him concerning Mary: 'She shall bring forth a son: and thou shalt call His Name Jesus.' Mary should speak of St. Joseph even as the father of Jesus; for she said to her Divine Son: 'Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.'

Devout Christian, behold in what honour St. Joseph is when he fulfils the duties of a father towards our Divine Saviour! Be astonished at the condescensions of God the Son in the mystery of the Incarnation, and at the greatness of St. Joseph, raised to so high a dignity.

II. It was eternally decreed that Mary should have a husband and guardian. This guardian should be the most pure and most just of men, endowed with an eminent degree of sanctity. It was St. Joseph. The Angel Gabriel

said to him : ' Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife.' St. Joseph, with loving reverence and devotedness, provided for Mary's wants, waited upon her, accompanied her in her journeys, protected her, and cherished and consoled her. Mary in turn shared his anxieties, accepted graciously his devoted offices, and supported him in the accomplishment of his Divinely appointed charge. Jesus showered sweet consolations on them both, and the light of His Divine countenance shone upon their lives to impart joy and peace. To understand the responsibilities, anxieties, and labours which were involved in St. Joseph's office, we must see him not only at Nazareth, but also at Bethlehem and in Egypt ; we must accompany him in his various journeys, and note the dangers, hardships, and difficulties attending them. St. Joseph had his sorrows as well as his joys. His character and his virtues may be summed up by saying that he was a worthy spouse of Mary. God fitted him by special graces for his double office of foster-father of Jesus and husband of Mary.

Devout Christian, turn with love to this great Saint, who was, and who is, so dear to Jesus and Mary. By adoption you, too, are a child of the Holy Family. Strive by a becoming life to be worthy of the blessings which belong to this adoption.

III. St. Joseph is the ' Patron of the Universal Church.' By this title we are taught what he is to us, and what we are to him. As our patron he loves us and interests himself in our welfare. We on our part must honour him and address our petitions to him ; then may we count upon his intercession on our behalf. The more solemn, public, and enthusiastic is our honour of the Saint, and the more fervent are our appeals to him, the greater should be our assurance of receiving the benefit of his prayers. Therefore has Holy Church encouraged in every land devotion to St. Joseph, and given greater solemnity to his festivals. He has everywhere devout clients, who place every confidence in his intercession, and who record favours received through his prayers. In paying honour to St. Joseph they

feel that they are performing an act of piety pleasing to our Lord, who loved and honoured him on earth, and who does so now in Heaven ; and one pleasing also to Mary, his loving Spouse on earth, bound to him now with a more sacred and lasting bond of love in Heaven. He who was the guardian of the Holy Family on earth, is now the guardian in Heaven of Christ's Church on earth and of all its members.

Devout Christian, have recourse every day to the patronage of St. Joseph. Supplicate him with special prayers in your needs, difficulties, and dangers. You will not do so in vain. Ask Mary to obtain for you the grace of true devotion to the Saints, and of special devotion to St. Joseph.

March 19.

ST. JOSEPH—II.

I. In honouring St. Joseph the faithful regard him as a model of chastity and of an unworldly life, and as the patron of a happy death. None but the pure are fitted to have charge of the pure. Therefore was St. Joseph selected by God to be the foster-father of Jesus all holy, and the husband of Mary the purest of virgins. St. Paul says : ' Every one hath his proper gift from God ' (1 Cor. vii. 7). Chastity in an eminent degree was St. Joseph's special gift ; in him it was spotless and fragrant, beautifying his soul and lifting it up to God. He was most pure in mind and heart, in conversation and conduct, and a holy discretion guided and guarded his steps. Every glance, word, gesture, and movement betokened the most perfect chastity. Christians revere in St. Joseph this most exquisite gift. If they would approach Jesus and Mary, and be loved by them, they should, everyone according to his calling, cultivate chastity. As a result they will make life holier and happier, and they will prepare their soul for richer gifts of grace.

Devout Christian, study the ways of a pure life ; seek ever to avoid whatever might cause any rude impression, or give you any idea or shock contrary to the delicate virtue of purity. Place yourself with confidence under the care of the most chaste St. Joseph, and beg of him to obtain for you the grace of a holy discretion in all your conduct.

II. St. Joseph is the model of an unworldly life. His life was for the most part one of retirement from the ways of the world. He had no craving for its wealth, pomps, vanities, or pleasures. He sought God in all he did. God's will was his law, and God's good pleasure was his only desire. We admire his recollection of mind, his prudence

in conduct, the wisdom of his speech, and his prayerful spirit. In adversity he was patient and courageous, and no murmur passed his lips. In labour he was assiduous, and he ever trusted himself to the wise dispensations of Divine Providence. Unworldly in character and life, his soul was disengaged from frivolous cares and free to soar to heavenly contemplations and desires. The company of Jesus and Mary was dearer to him in the poorest surroundings than the society of the great in luxury and abundance. Christians should meditate upon the words of St. Paul: 'Your life is hid with Christ in God,' and learn that their true happiness is not to be found in what the world loves and seeks, but in the ways of a virtuous and pious life.

Devout Christian, study the life of St. Joseph, that you may be drawn to walk in his footsteps. St. Paul says: 'From all appearance of evil refrain yourselves. And may the God of peace Himself sanctify you in all things: that your whole spirit, and soul, and body may be preserved blameless in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Thess. v. 22, 23). Let your life be unworldly, that you may taste and relish spiritual peace.

III. St. Joseph is regarded as the special patron of a happy death. We picture to ourselves the scene of his death. We see our Lord, now grown to full manhood, standing at St. Joseph's side, speaking words of comfort, hope, and blessing, enriching with incomparable favours the soul that is departing, and flooding it with untold sweetness. We see Mary there too: her prayers and her blessing and inspiring words of comfort give joy and peace to her dying spouse. Then the soul departs, and finds its resting-place in limbo, where it awaits Christ's descent there at His death. Christians desire for themselves favours at death in some way resembling those granted to St. Joseph. They wish to be comforted by Jesus and Mary, and by St. Joseph also. They beseech St. Joseph to obtain for them the grace of a happy death. They do not desire for themselves at that momentous time the consolations of worldly aids and comforts, but the

spiritual helps afforded by prayer and the Holy Sacraments, by peace of conscience, by supernatural hope, and by the blessings of Heaven.

Devout Christian, look forward with wise prevision to your departure from this world. Leave nothing undone to obtain for yourself the grace of a happy death. Beseech your heavenly Mother Mary to intercede for you, and to help you ever by her prayers, that by a good life you may prepare yourself for a happy death. Ask for this grace through your holy patron St. Joseph.

March 20.

THE HUMILIATION OF THE PASSION.

I. St. Paul tells us that our Lord 'humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death' (Phil. ii. 8). Our Lord's humiliation was witnessed in every scene of His sacred Passion, and it culminated in the final scene of His death. He did not pass away in a gentle sleep in a still room surrounded by every comfort which affectionate and thoughtful care could supply: He did not close His earthly career in honour and in peace; nor was His demise the signal for universal sorrow and mourning. No; for of Him did the prophet foretell: 'He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter' (Isa. liii. 7); and of His own death He Himself had declared: 'The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the ancients and by the high priests, and the scribes, and be killed' (St. Mark viii. 31). All the prophecies were fulfilled; and no more appalling scenes were ever enacted than those with which His earthly life was ended. Our Lord embraced every humiliation with consummate patience and resignation, fulfilling what was written: 'But I am a worm, and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people. All they that saw Me have laughed Me to scorn: they have spoken with the lips, and wagged the head' (Ps. xxi. 7, 8).

Devout Christian, be prepared to bear reproach for your Saviour's sake. Leave to the worldly the pomp and vanities of the world. Be confused at the thought of your pride and love of esteem. Those who shirk every shadow and semblance of humiliation have not the garb and spirit of Christ's true followers.

II. When there was question of atoning for man's rebellion against God, it was becoming that humiliation should have its place in any atonement that should be

offered. Humiliation disarms the person offended, and it prepares the way for reconciliation. When the case is between God, who is offended, and man His own creature, who has sinned, humiliation is indispensable. It is written: 'A contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.' When humiliation accompanies contrition, God is moved to pardon. What do we see when God's own Eternal Son allied Himself with us in order to effect our reconciliation with His Father? St. Paul tells us that the Son 'debased Himself, taking the form of a servant' (Phil. ii. 7); and, as we have seen, 'He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death,' for, as the prophet said: 'The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all' (Isa. liii. 6). See how great was our Lord's humiliation in the Passion! Leaving the garden where He had thrown Himself upon the ground in secret, and where He had with meekness and resignation accepted the chalice of sufferings, He permitted a vile traitor to kiss His sacred face, and a craven band of ruffians to seize upon His person. Before Annas He received on the face a desperate blow from one of the servants. Before Caiphas He was treated with the greatest ignominy, being mocked, blindfolded, struck, derided, and asked to prophesy, and then smitten in the face; and the lowest menials in the high priest's service spat in His face. The prophecies were fulfilled; for being reviled, He did not revile, and as a lamb before his shearer, He opened not His mouth.

Devout Christian, be astonished at the excess of your Saviour's humiliations in the first scenes of His Passion. Offer Him the homage of your sympathy, and comfort Him with assurances of your gratitude and love.

III. Our Lord was hustled with ignominy from the high priest's house to Pilate's court, and there His own people accused Him before the pagan governor as a malefactor, and they clamoured for His death. Before Herod, to whom He had been sent for judgment, He was vested as a fool and treated as one. Having been sent back to Pilate, a notorious robber was preferred before Him, and then our Lord was stripped and cruelly scourged. The humiliation

of this outrage was followed by His being clothed in purple, crowned with thorns, and mocked as a king. Again His persecutors spat upon Him, and they struck Him on the head. Although judicially declared innocent, our Lord was finally condemned to the most ignominious of deaths. Carrying His Cross, He was led out before the bloodthirsty multitude, and taken through the streets of Jerusalem to an elevated spot outside the walls, where He was cruelly nailed to the Cross as though a criminal of the worst class, and He was placed between two thieves who were crucified at the same time. Even on the Cross His sufferings and humiliation did not save Him from insult; for the chief priests, and scribes, and ancients, and they that passed by the way, blasphemed Him, and, wagging their heads, they taunted Him. Christians should not be indifferent to all this humiliation, and to the lessons it teaches.

Devout Christian, enter into the school of Jesus; attach yourself to Him even in His humiliations; learn of Him who is meek and humble of heart. Do not refuse to bear taunt or reproach for His sake; and be not of the number of those who, through conceit of their supposed excellence, resent every real or imaginary slight. Pray to Mary, who accompanied her Divine Son in His humiliations, to obtain for you a share in their fruit, and the grace of a truly humble spirit.

March 21.

THE ATONEMENT OF THE PASSION.

I. Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Mary, submitted Himself to the sufferings of the sacred Passion, to the indignities and abasement which accompanied them, and to death on the Cross, in order to satisfy God's insulted Majesty, and to reconcile God and man—man having offended God and incurred everlasting disgrace and punishment. We call this the mystery of the Atonement. What consoling benefits, then, we commemorate in the events of the sacred Passion! It is written: 'By His bruises we are healed.' Our Lord, 'making peace through the blood of His Cross' (Col. i. 20), gave His life once to save us from everlasting death. The Most High became as a malefactor, and 'was reputed with the wicked' (Isa. liii. 12). The Most Just suffered for the guilty, that the guilty might be spared, according to the prophecy: 'For the wickedness of My people have I struck Him' (Isa. liii. 8). The sins of all have been atoned for by One. Our peace has been obtained through His conflict: 'the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.' The eternal blessedness of the Elect has been purchased by the indescribable sufferings of the Author and Giver of all blessedness. The Divine Creator of the world was raised up on a Cross between Heaven and earth, so as, in death, not even to find repose on the earth which His hands had made. O Divine Lover of men, how shall we express our gratitude and our devotedness?

Devout Christian, meditate with profound affection on this mystery of Atonement. Recall the words of St. Paul: 'He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all'; and say with the same Apostle: 'Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ?' (Rom. viii. 32, 35).

II. The mystery of the Atonement is a revelation of Divine love. In creation this love, as it were, spread itself out, establishing and exhibiting its enduring tokens in every created thing that composes this universe, telling us everywhere we go, and wherever we reach out our hands or cast our eyes, that a loving God has made everything for us. In Redemption this same love assumes a new phase and exhibits a different token, not now seen in the outspread tableau of a created universe, but in God Himself made man—in His own human Body which He has assumed, and which He has offered in sacrifice for us. Now has He said: 'I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love' (Osee xi. 4). O Christians, be astonished at the stupendous mystery of Divine condescension. What is the spectacle that Calvary presents to your gaze? In the hour of man's Redemption on Calvary, darkness is cast over all else, and desolation reigns around, that Christ, our adorable Saviour, being raised aloft on the Cross, all eyes and all hearts may be directed to Him as to the centre-piece of Redemption, and may henceforward be drawn by love and gratitude to Him. Such is His will, for He said: 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself' (St. John xii. 32).

Devout Christian, yield yourself to the power of that grace by which God, made man and sacrificed for your sake, would draw you to Himself. When assisting at Holy Mass, recall your Saviour's love for you displayed on Calvary. The token of God's love given on Calvary is renewed in the daily Mass. St. Paul said: 'As often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until He come' (1 Cor. xi. 26).

III. As the precious Blood of the Divine Victim on Calvary soaked into the earth and redeemed it from a lasting curse, so should we wish It to soak into our souls, that It may redeem them from sin, and remove far from us the anger of God. Let us not lose that 'freedom wherewith Christ has made us free' (Gal. iv. 31). How happy we should be in our condition of freedom from sin and from

everlasting condemnation! St. Paul says: 'Stand fast, and be not held again under the yoke of bondage' (Gal. v. 1). He spoke of the bondage of the Old Law from which Christ freed us; but the bondage of sin is heavier, and from this also we have been freed by the death of Christ, 'Who was delivered up for our sins' (Rom. iv. 25). The Apostle therefore says: 'Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace' (vi. 14). God will be no longer angry with us, if we remain faithful to grace; for our reconciliation is full, perfect, and permanent through the infinite merits of our Lord's Atonement. St. Paul says: 'God indeed was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing to them their sins' (2 Cor. v. 19). 'Behold all things are made new' (v. 17); and now 'in all things you are made rich in Him . . . so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace' (1 Cor. i. 5, 7). Our service of God should therefore be a joyous and a grateful one, stamped with unshaken confidence in His infinite goodness and mercy, and in the infinite merits of our loving Saviour. Sinners, alas! tear up and destroy the bond of reconciliation, and set at naught the price of their redemption; thus do they bring against themselves the decree of eternal condemnation.

Devout Christian, recognize your supreme indebtedness for all the benefits which our Lord's humiliations, sufferings and death have purchased for you, and ever commemorate with devout affection the mystery of Christ's Atonement. Beseech your heavenly Mother, Mary, to obtain for you the grace to pursue with earnestness and constancy your Christian vocation now, that you may yet come to realize the richer and everlasting blessings prepared for the Elect in the next world.

March 22.

THE SACRED PASSION AND SIN.

I. It is very wonderful that the all-holy God should become man, and suffer and die for our sins. How noble a cause our Lord embraced when He undertook to redeem man! He saw mankind fallen and deserving of punishment, and unable to offer satisfaction for sin, and to escape the Divine wrath. He came into the world to nail to the Cross the decree of man's condemnation, to re-establish man in God's favour, and through His own infinite merits to bring him to a never-ending reward. All this was to be effected through His own sacred Passion and Death. Sin may therefore be described as the cause of our Lord's bitter Passion. We hear our Lord say to His disciples after His prayer in the Garden: 'Behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners' (St. Matt. xxvi. 45). It was decreed that He should suffer for our sins: 'The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all' (Isa. liii. 6). In His sacred Passion He was weighed down with the sins of pride, lust, avarice, hatred, anger, intemperance, and injustice, of all men.

Devout Christian, recall with sincere gratitude our Saviour's love in dying for your sins. Seeing that our Lord died to wash out sin, and to put an end to Satan's dominion over men's souls, strive ever so to live that Christ only may reign over you and receive your loving homage.

II. To expiate our sins, our Lord endured every kind of torment and ignominy. We even hear Him exclaim from the Cross: 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' (St. Matt. xxvii. 46). How painful, then, it should be to us to think that men for whom He so lovingly sacrificed Himself should disregard and set at naught His

sufferings and death! Do we not see in this ungrateful conduct of sinners an evidence of the malice that there is in sin? St. Peter tells us that our Saviour 'bore our sins in His Body upon the tree: that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice' (1 St. Pet. ii. 24); but sinners continue in their sins. They repeat them; and whereas Christ has opened to them the way to eternal life, they yet rush headlong on the road that leads to everlasting perdition. Our Lord might ask: 'What profit is there in My Blood?' (Ps. xxix. 10). His loving designs are frustrated. While the just look lovingly and gratefully upon their Saviour's sacred Wounds, and strive to walk in dutifulness, the wicked wound their own souls with secret and public sins, leading a life displeasing to God and fatal to their own happiness. What blindness, folly, and wickedness there is on their part!

Devout Christian, let the thought of your Saviour's sacred Passion move you to constancy in piety. Lament the ingratitude of sinners, and be resolved ever carefully to avoid every stumbling-block that might cause you to fall away from grace.

III. If it were not for the infinite value of our Lord's satisfaction, how could sinners of every generation be saved? The merits of Christ's redemption through His sacred Passion will never be exhausted, and they continue to be applied by the Divine Mercy to the souls of men, as well to win sinners to repentance, as to restore them to grace when they have repented. Yet relapsing sinners are said to reopen their Saviour's wounds, and to crucify again to themselves their loving Redeemer. As St. Paul declares: 'Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, and making Him a mockery' (Heb. vi. 6). This is so, because by committing sin again they once again place the cause of our Saviour's Passion; they do again the evil to remove which Christ died. Under the Old Law a sacrifice for sin had to be offered as often as sin was committed, a fresh victim had to expiate the fresh sin; but now, under the New Law, the one Divine Victim washes out all sins. There has to be granted to the sinner a fresh application

of Christ's infinite merits. Relapsing sinners ! unrepenting sinners ! by your evil deeds, and by your despising grace, you contemn your crucified Lord, and make naught of His Redemption.

Devout Christian, seek at the fountain of your Saviour's Passion comfort and hope. Strive by your piety to make amends for the outrages offered by sinners to your Saviour's loving Heart. Ask Mary to obtain for you a tender devotion to the sacred Passion, and zeal for the conversion of sinners.

March 23.

'IT IS CONSUMMATED.'

I. St. John describes our Divine Saviour's death with these words: 'Jesus therefore, when he Had taken the vinegar, said, It is consummated. And bowing His head, He gave up the ghost' (xix. 30). How much those last words of our Lord convey! We may apply them to the Jews. 'He came unto His own, and His own received Him not' (St. John i. 11). Their wickedness was consummated on Calvary. St. Peter reproached them with it more than once. Speaking of our Lord, he said to the Jews: 'This same . . . you by the hands of wicked men have crucified and slain' (Acts ii. 23; iii. 14, 15). St. Stephen likewise upbraided them, saying: 'You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and lips, you always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do you also. . . . They have slain them who foretold of the coming of the Just One; of Whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers' (Acts vii. 51, 52). Notwithstanding all the precious graces offered to the Jews, their conduct is unchanged, their unbelief is consummated. 'All the day long have I spread My hands to a people that believeth not, and contradicteth Me' (Rom. x. 21). They might even now kneel at the foot of the Cross, believing and repenting, but their hard-heartedness is now consummated. Our Lord from His Cross seems to upbraid them, as though in fulfilment of the words of the prophet: 'The Lord will enter into judgment with His people, and He will plead against Israel. O my people, what have I done to thee, or in what have I molested thee? Answer thou Me' (Mic. vi. 2, 3). To how many sinners who resist grace might not our Lord address the same

touching words! Will they not repent before it is too late?

Devout Christian, turn with devout affection to your dying Saviour. While sinners crucify Him again to themselves (Heb. vi. 6) through their wickedness, seek to be crucified with Him through tender and constant devotedness. Recall St. Paul's words: 'With Christ I am nailed to the Cross. And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me' (Gal. ii. 19, 20).

II. 'It is consummated.' In Christ 'vision and prophecy' are fulfilled, as was foretold (Dan. ix. 24). When our Lord had been seized, the Evangelist, describing the event, said: 'Now all this was done, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled' (St. Matt. xxvi. 56). St. Peter, too, told the Jews that this should be so, when he said to them: 'But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled' (Acts iii. 18). Our Lord seemed to say: 'Behold now are all those prophecies of David, of Isaias, of Daniel, and of others fulfilled; all the types of Me and of My sacrifice are now realized, and the hitherto acceptable sacrifices and blood-offerings are now superseded, for they are no longer of any value (Heb. x. 5-10). It is consummated. See now in all I have suffered in My sacred Passion; see in all My wounds; see in the painful character of My present surroundings; see in the cruel conduct of My tormentors, and see in My own meekness and patience that what is written concerning My sacrifice has been fulfilled to the letter.' O Christians, renew your faith in the truth of Divine revelation, and believe that the prophecies not yet fulfilled will in due course be most certainly fulfilled. Be not dismayed at Christ's sufferings. Be faithful to your Saviour. St. Paul says: 'If we be dead with Him, we shall live also with Him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He will also deny us. If we believe not, He continueth faithful; He cannot deny Himself' (2 Tim. ii. 11-13).

Devout Christian, strive so to live that at death it may be recorded of you, that you did the things appointed by

God for you to do. Remember our Lord's words: 'It becometh us to fulfil all justice' (St. Matt. iii. 15).

III. 'It is consummated.' Our Lord's holy and merciful mission for man's salvation has been accomplished. 'The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' (St. Luke xix. 10). Our Lord might have said from His Cross: 'The Saints of the Old Law were saved upon the pledge of My Redemption: behold now the pledge is rendered, and they are ransomed. And now, too, I have made every provision for the Saints of the New Law. Grace and salvation are through Me. Through My death shall grace be imparted, and pardon for sin be granted; through it to the truly penitent the guilt of their sins shall be taken away, and the eternal punishment be remitted. It is consummated. The cruelty of My executioners has reached that limit beyond which it cannot go, beyond which lies death. My own life is consummated. The sea of My Passion has been crossed, and now I enter by right into My eternal inheritance. I take hold of the unblemished crown of glory in My heavenly kingdom. Now do all things belong to Me by the purchase of My precious Blood. All men are Mine by a double right; for I am now not only their Creator, but also their Redeemer.' To His Heavenly Father He says: 'I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do. And now glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself' (St. John xvii. 4, 5).

Devout Christian, admire the perfection of God's works. But how great is the mystery! Our Lord said: 'O foolish, and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so enter into His glory?' (St. Luke xxiv. 25, 26). He will lead you His own way to your eternal destiny. Submit yourself dutifully to the designs of His Providence in sorrows as well as in joys. Pray Mary, your heavenly Protectress, to obtain for you the inestimable grace of final perseverance.

March 24.

OUR LORD DEAD ON THE CROSS.

I. Let us contemplate the spectacle of our Saviour hanging on the Cross after death. It was three o'clock in the afternoon. There had been darkness over the earth for three hours. A change came over many who had witnessed our Lord's crucifixion. The centurion in charge exclaimed: 'Indeed this Man was the Son of God'; and 'all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight returned striking their breasts.' There was already, therefore, a beginning of the fulfilment of our Lord's prophecy: 'When you shall have lifted up the Son of man, then shall you know that I am He' (St. John viii. 28). Two other prophecies had to be fulfilled, namely: 'You shall not break a bone of Him,' and, 'They shall look on Him whom they pierced' (St. John xix. 36, 37). The soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves; but 'after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear opened His side, and immediately there came out blood and water.' This desecration of our Lord's sacred Body was the last act of the Crucifixion. What an indignity was thus offered to our Lord even when His spirit had departed! How truly was it written in prophecy: 'But I am a worm, and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people' (Ps. xxi. 7).

Devout Christian, exercise your faith in our Lord's Divinity by acts of adoration. Adore the sacred Body and the holy Wounds of your crucified Saviour. Kiss with devout affection, and in spirit, those saving Wounds. Detest the coldness and ingratitude of so many sinners who would reopen them by their sins.

II. Let us look upon the sacred Body hanging on the

Cross after death, and let us picture to ourselves its mangled condition. The head is pierced with thorns, and the hair is clotted with blood; the face is made unsightly, being covered with blood and marked with cruel blows; the shoulder that bore the weight of the Cross is rugged with a most frightful wound; the arms are livid from blows received in the various scenes of the Passion; the chest, sides, and back are all striped and cut with the lashes of the scourging; the legs are bruised from blows and kicks, and the knees are covered with bleeding sores caused by falls under the heavy Cross; the hands and feet are pierced by nails; and the side has been opened with a lance. The head has fallen upon the chest, and the whole body, being lifeless, hangs an ungainly shape from the transfixing nails. How cruel an executioner our sins have been! 'He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins.' Our Lord said: 'So must the Son of man be lifted up' (St. John iii. 14). If the spectacle of the dead body of a queen led Francis Borgia to leave the world, and to embrace the religious state, should not the spectacle of our Lord's sacred wounded Body hanging on the Cross move us to detest our sins and to avoid all the ways of evil? O sinners, how ungrateful you are! Oh, reflect seriously on the teachings of the Passion, and pray for the grace of true conversion. Then will there be hope of your salvation.

Devout Christian, thank your loving Saviour for suffering all those cruel wounds for your sake. They are now as so many fountains of mercy and grace, for the healing and sanctifying of your soul. Praise God's bounty and love, seeing how those wounds have been turned to your good.

III. We should devoutly bear in mind and commemorate our Saviour's death, for it is to us the door leading to eternal life. Our Lord said: 'I am the door' (St. John x. 9): through Him, through the infinite merits of His death, is opened to sinners a way into the kingdom of His grace in this world, and into the kingdom of His glory in the world to come. Praised then be the merciful goodness of God, Who has through Christ opened to men the way of salvation. St. Paul says: 'But God (who is rich in mercy) for

His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ (by whose grace you are saved), and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places through Christ Jesus' (Eph. ii. 4-6). Let us, then, turn our eyes from the sad spectacle of our Lord's Body hanging dead upon the Cross, and raise them to the consoling contemplation of the bliss and glory of the heavenly kingdom. What a contrast there is between these two themes for contemplation! So should it be between the conditions of our present life and that which is to come. We are, indeed, 'joint heirs with Christ: yet so if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him' (Rom. viii. 17). We must be His followers now, and therefore bear our cross after Him; we must be His sheep now, and recognize Him as our Pastor; we must humble ourselves, and become as little children, that we may pass through the door leading to eternal life; we must leave the kingdom of unbelief, sin, and worldliness, if we would enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

Devout Christian, while sinners provoke God's anger by remaining in sin, and neglecting the means of salvation which are so abundantly provided for them, strive ever to walk in the path of grace, piety, and virtue trodden by God's Saints. Be patient under the afflictions which may be your lot: 'Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, Who, having joy set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of God' (Heb. xii. 2). Ask Mary to obtain for you the grace of courage and patience, that you may bear your cross with profit.

March 25.

MARY BEFORE THE NATIVITY.

I. The good tidings of great joy concerning the coming of the Messias were announced in the first instance to Mary. The centuries of expectation appointed by God had passed, and now Gabriel, who may be called the Angel of the Incarnation, stands before Mary. He had, centuries before, appeared to Daniel, and a few months before to Zachary; but now the Word is about to be made flesh, and Mary is to be the Mother of the world's Redeemer, and Gabriel, sent by God, comes to her. What tidings does he bring? 'Thou shalt bring forth a Son; and thou shalt call His Name Jesus.' The Angel proceeds to declare how great this Son shall be: He shall be called the Son of the Most High, and He shall reign for ever. Mary was in trepidation when Gabriel began his message with praise of herself; but she now listens calmly and wonderingly to the praises proclaimed of the Divine Child whom she shall bring forth. She ventures only one question: 'How shall this be done?' And she learns that she shall yet remain a virgin. Humility, joy, obedience, and gratitude are for the moment contending sentiments in her most pure heart, and she exclaims: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word.'

Devout Christian, admire Mary's perfect behaviour in all this scene. Sing praise and gratitude to God, and salute Mary with respect and admiration: 'Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee.'

II. The Angel had said to Mary: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.' The Divine mystery of the Incarnation was thus revealed to Mary. It was not for her to scrutinize the

operations of God in this mystery, but only to believe. The Angel went on to say : ' And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' Weeks go by, and Joseph remains in ignorance of the mystery ; but at length the Angel of the Lord instructs him, saying : ' That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son : and thou shalt call His Name Jesus. For He shall save His people from their sins.' Joseph now understands more clearly the nature of his calling. Who shall say with what confusion and humility he learns the part allotted to him in the Divine plans ? He consecrates himself more fully to the fulfilment of God's will, and he continues to pray for grace. He admires Mary with even a more reverent love than before, and waits upon her and protects her with a more perfect watchfulness and devotedness. In the meantime Mary pays her visit to St. Elizabeth, her own soul wrapt up in holiest thought, sentiment, rapture, and prayer.

Devout Christian, reflect with reverence and admiration upon what St. Luke records of these events. Congratulate Mary and Joseph upon the choice God has made of them in the fulfilment of this mystery of the Divine Incarnation.

III. Mary, entering Zachary's house, saluted Elizabeth. It is for Elizabeth a moment of grace. Her unborn infant is at once sanctified, and Elizabeth experiences the sweetest consolation, for she herself was filled with the Holy Ghost. The sublime mystery is revealed to her, and, crying out with a loud voice, she exclaims : ' Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me ?' We are astonished as we hear and weigh the meaning of all St. Elizabeth says. How reverential and how touching is her address to her youthful cousin, Mary ! Mary, in most perfect humility and gratitude to God, refers all to His glory, and utters her canticle of praise : ' My soul doth magnify the Lord : and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.' The Church in her office repeats daily this canticle ; for it is a perfect model of prayer, and the only hymn of praise which we have from Mary. Mary comforts

Elizabeth by spending three months under Zachary's roof, and she then returns to Nazareth.

Devout Christian, learn in these events the lesson of submission to the dispensations of Divine Providence, and of practical humility and charity. Ever praise God, as Mary did, for His blessings, and bear them in mind. Be not elated if you receive marks of special favour. Pray to Mary to obtain for you grace to relish with gratitude the work of God's mercy manifested in Christ's Incarnation.

March 26.

'WITH A SPEAR OPENED HIS SIDE.'

I. JESUS had uttered His last loud cry, and had expired; and His dead body was hanging on the Cross. We might say with Zachary: 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel'; for our Lord's sufferings are over, and man has been redeemed. There was deep sorrow at the foot of the Cross, for the sword of grief had pierced Mary's soul, and the other holy women and St. John were in desolation. Let St. John himself tell us what he then saw happen: 'The soldiers therefore came: and they broke the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with him. But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear opened His side, and immediately there came out blood and water' (St. John xix. 32-34). Then were Mary, the holy women, and St. John, the first to fulfil the prophecy: 'They shall look upon Me, whom they have pierced: and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son' (Zach. xii. 10). How horrified and how pained they were to witness this fiendish outrage! St. John Chrysostom says that the soldier opened our Saviour's side to win the favour of the Jews, who wished to insult Him even when He was dead. How evil a thing it is to give way to any wicked passion! Such a passion is as a fire which 'never saith: It is enough' (Prov. xxx. 16). It is written: 'The bowels of the wicked are cruel' (Prov. xii. 10): the sight of Mary, and the knowledge of the intense pain which so horrid an outrage would be to the Mother, did not restrain the soldier from inflicting it.

Devout Christian, impress the picture of this saddening scene upon your mind, and speak your sentiments in prayer to Jesus and Mary with respectful sympathy.

II. The spear opened our Lord's side, and pierced His most sacred Heart, which was the treasury of His love. With His death the time for atonement had expired, and nothing remained on His part to be done towards the complete and most ample atonement which the justice of His Heavenly Father demanded. But the opening of the Sacred Heart points to the sins which come forth from men's hearts for which our Lord had atoned, and it should make us detest these sins. Our Lord said : ' From the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies (St. Matt. xv. 19). O perverse hearts of men, you were created to love God and all that is good, but, alas ! you turn to that which is evil. O Christians, watch over your hearts, and keep far from them what might corrupt them. If our Lord had His side opened and His sacred Heart pierced, and if there came forth blood and water, this was to prove how true and generous is His love of us. All this points to the love with which He has first loved us, and seems to say to us that there is nothing so dear to Him that He would not sacrifice for our sake. We see how, for our salvation, He shed the last drop of His most precious Blood. O thoughtless men, how long will you steel your hearts against the holy influence of Divine charity ? When will you respond to the claims of God's love ?

Devout Christian, is your heart always right with God ? Pray for grace to drive from it whatever might make it proud, envious, rebellious, or tepid. Bear ever in mind the generosity of our Lord's love, and pray that you may always be prepared to make any sacrifice He may demand at your hands.

III. St. Bernard tells us that the holy side of Jesus was pierced, and an opening made to the Sacred Heart, that we might enter therein and dwell there. This demands that we should seek ever to know and to do our Lord's most holy will, and that thus we should be bound to Him with the chains of true and practical love. We read in Isaias : ' Enter thou into the rock, and hide thee in the pit !' (Isa. ii. 10). We may interpret the rock as meaning Christ, and

the pit His Sacred Heart. Let us run to take shelter in that pit in times of temptation and of sorrow. St. Augustine says: 'Longinus opened with a spear Christ's side: there I enter, and rest in safety.' The Doctors of the Church see represented by the water and blood which flowed from our Saviour's open side the two great Sacraments of the Church, Baptism and the Holy Eucharist—the one washes the soul, and the other nourishes it. Let us admire the love and long-suffering of our Lord, who for the cruel insult of the opening of His side makes so loving a return. If our Lord has opened to us His most Sacred Heart, we should also open our hearts to Him. We do this when we receive Him in Holy Communion. Let us receive the Holy Eucharist as often as our circumstances permit it. We also open our hearts to our Lord when we make a spiritual communion. Let us nourish this pious practice: it will prove to us the source of spiritual strength, joy, and consolation.

Devout Christian, seek often to enter with devout affection into your Saviour's sacred side, to be sheltered therein from the withering blasts of worldliness and sensuality which destroy the fresh blossoms of piety and religious fervour. Beseech Mary, who witnessed with admirable patience the opening of that side on Calvary, to obtain for you the grace of a holy attraction to God's will in all sufferings and sorrows.

March 27.

'WHAT ARE THESE WOUNDS?'

I. We read in the prophecy of Zacharias (xiii. 6): 'They shall say to Him: What are these wounds in the midst of Thy hands? And He shall say: With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved Me.' How ungrateful, alas! is the return our Saviour meets with even from those who should love Him most! The vision displayed before the prophet's eyes would seem to have been that of our Saviour's wounds on the Cross. Are we among those indifferent Christians who are not moved to sentiments of sympathy, love, and gratitude by our Lord's sufferings on the Cross? Even if He had not died for us, but for some other race or people, the sight of the Son of God, wounded, bleeding, dying on the Cross, ought to draw forth tears of sincere compassion. That closing scene, however, of our Saviour's life was but the consummation of much suffering, the last step on the path of His sacred Passion, the death-blow following outrages unnumbered. It was as the keen blade cutting loose our Lord's most holy Soul from a Body, reduced at length by pains and wounds until it had reached the stage when it could endure no more. Were we to contemplate all the terrible scenes which culminated in that last painful one on Calvary, should we not be moved to most intense sympathy?

Devout Christian, all those sacred sufferings were endured not for another race of beings, but for men, for all men without exception, for you. Will you show yourself ungrateful? Oh no; say to your loving Saviour: 'O Lord, Thou hast loved me too much, and I have loved Thee too little. Oh, permit not that I should ever offend Thee again.'

II. When our Lord accomplished His sacrifice, all Nature seem astounded: the sun hid itself and withdrew its light,

the earth trembled, and its rocks were split, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, and the tombs of the dead sent back many of them that slept. Shall it be said that men for whom our Lord died remain unmoved ? What retribution will be meted out to sinners who crucified the Lord of Glory ? God's love has stifled His indignation ; His fatherly compassion has gained the mastery. We read in Isaias : ' And He said : Surely they are My people, children that will not deny : so He became their Saviour. . . . In His love, and in His mercy He redeemed them ' (lxiii. 8, 9). God would indeed spare sinners if only they would repent. For how many, however, will not our Lord's sacred Wounds plead in vain ? These Wounds will cry out not for them, but against them. Our Lord did not suffer for Himself—He was the spotless Lamb of God, but He suffered for our sins. Should not the remembrance of His sufferings keep us from sin ? Alas ! many sinners go on their evil way listlessly, and often even with detestable ingratitude. What are our Saviour's cruel Wounds to them ? Such men are worse than Pharaoh, who resisted God, and who hardened his heart so as not to comply with God's demand. Such men are worse than the nations living in the darkness of infidelity, who know nothing of the mystery of Redemption. How long, O sinners, will you despise God's love and mercy ?

Devout Christian, look often upon your Saviour's wounded hands, and take care not to harden your heart, so as not to heed the lessons they teach. Ever detest your sins which caused those expiatory Wounds. Let, too, the spectacle of men's ingratitude move you to a detestation of so base a return for God's unspeakable goodness. Ever thank God for all His mercies.

III. ' With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved Me.' Not in a far-off land did our Lord receive His wounds, but in His own land, and in the midst of His own people. It was hard for Him to experience in His own person the realization of His parable about that son, whom the master of a vineyard sent to claim the produce from wicked husbandmen, who had already beaten and

driven away servants sent on the same errand. The master said : ' What shall I do ? I will send my beloved son : it may be, when they see him, they will reverence him.' We know how he was treated. Casting the son out of the vineyard, those wicked husbandmen killed him (St. Luke xx.). This was the treatment our Lord experienced. He Himself was the Son sent by the Heavenly Father. Driving Him forth out of Jerusalem, and up the hill of Calvary, His people put Him to death. After all His sufferings and cruel wounds, after His most ignominious death, His children of the New Law prove themselves as ungrateful as those of the Old Dispensation. They prove themselves even more ungrateful, because they have been more richly blessed than the Jews of old, and because they have seen the realities of Christ's sufferings, which were known to the Jews only in the obscure light of prophecy.

Devout Christian, lament the base ingratitude which sinners manifest towards our Lord. Pray for the conversion of all sinners, that they may come to love God, and to give glory to His Name. Ask Mary to plead in your own behalf, to save you from all ingratitude, and from all forgetfulness of God's loving bounties and tender mercies.

March 28.

'HE WAS WOUNDED FOR OUR INIQUITIES.'

I. LET us recall these words of the prophet while we contemplate the sacred Body of Jesus, supported by His Mother, before it is laid in the tomb. The thought in our mind now is that our Lord died for our sins. It is a bitter and a humiliating thought. 'He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins' (Isa. liii. 5). 'Christ also died once for our sins, the Just for the unjust' (1 St. Pet. iii. 18). Alas, that sin was ever committed! Alas, that we have sinned! Alas, again, that when we had sinned we so soon dried up the tears of our sorrow, and forgot our wickedness! Ay, did we not sin again? Oh, for the spirit of the prophets! David bewailing his sin, exclaimed: 'I did eat ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping' (Ps. ci. 10). Jeremias, lamenting the sins of his nation, cried out: 'Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes? and I will weep day and night' (Jer. ix. 1). We behold the Body of Jesus lying lifeless in the arms of His holy Mother—that Mother sorrow-laden, martyred, too, by the sword of grief which still pierced her soul. Let us apply to her the words of the prophet: 'Weeping, she hath wept in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks. There is none to comfort her among all them that were dear to her' (Lam. i. 2). Well might she say: 'O all ye that pass by the way attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow' (i. 12). Her eyes are fixed on the dead, wounded Body of her Divine Son. Who, after Jesus, could tell us so well as Mary by what sufferings sin was expiated?

Devout Christian, bear ever in grateful remembrance the part taken by Mary on Calvary. Grieve that, by the wounds they inflicted upon the Son, your sins also wounded

the tender immaculate heart of the Mother. Let the thoughts of the effects of sin, seen in the expiation it demanded, cause you ever to lament your offences against God, and ever to strive to avoid falling back into sin.

II. 'Wounded and bruised.' How truly prophecy spoke! Mary beholds the ravages made by sin; these are the wounds inflicted on Jesus in His most sacred and adorable Body. The soul is not there; it suffered even more than the Body—yes, a thousand times more, in anguish, shock, and desolation. When our Lord came into the world, He started boldly on His great mission. As David said: 'He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way' (Ps. xviii. 6). Nor did He faint in accomplishing it. When the time of His sacred Passion arrived, He offered Himself readily to every suffering; He was assailed and tormented in countless ways, and He was prepared for every species of ignominy. 'Come, then, rude soldiers, scoffers, and deriders; come, scourges and thorny crown; come, fierce blows and withering scorn; and come, too, rough nails, hard cross, and insulting spear. Come and wreck your malice on Me.' By His prophet He had said: 'I have given My Body to the strikers, and My cheeks to them that plucked them; I have not turned away My face from them that rebuked Me and spit upon Me' (Isa. l. 6). Jesus was omnipotent, yet He placed Himself in the power of all: He was infinite Wisdom, yet He was derided as a fool; He was the Sovereign Lord of Heaven and earth, yet He was made a mock King; He was Sanctity itself, yet He was condemned as a malefactor; and He was all Goodness, Bounty, and Love, yet we see Him deprived of every consolation, even of what might satisfy His thirst in the agonies of death. How much it cost Him to expiate our sins! Death put an end to His cruel torments, and to the insults of His enemies, but it left the sacred Body yet bearing all the evidences of the most cruel treatment to which it had been subjected. Oh, what a heart-rending spectacle it afforded for Mary's loving, sorrowing eyes to rest on!

Devout Christian, set your face against every form of

evil. May the thought of the sufferings of your Saviour nourish your soul with sentiments of compunction for your past sins !

III. O Mary, the course of your Son is run. His victory over sin has been won. His sacred head resting in your lap, in the still peace of death, glistens with jewels of clotted blood. And you see in every member of His Body cruel wounds, which betoken the generosity with which He sacrificed Himself in order to atone for the sins of men. 'He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins.' O sinners, has the spectacle no lesson for you ? When you sin, and repeat your sin, what do you ? You prepare once more in your hearts the thorny crown, the whips, the nails, the cross, and the spear ; you once more lay hands on the Divine Victim, to crucify Him. Will you not stay in your course ? Will you not imitate countless other sinners, who have been won to repentance by the thought of Christ's Passion, or by the silent but touching appeal made to them by the Crucifix ? Look on Mary, your heavenly Intercessor with Jesus, as she embraced the dead Body of her Son on Calvary, and try to understand her feelings. With what words would she have then addressed you ? Will you resist the appeal she would now make to you ? She does not forget the sufferings and death by which Jesus so lovingly expiated your sins to save you from everlasting death, and to win you for everlasting life. Will you forget them ?

Devout Christian, be comforted by the thought of those sufferings which caused such pain to your heavenly Mother. They are your hope. Never permit any thought of despair to cross your mind. Jesus has satisfied for your sins, and He applies to your soul in many ways the happy fruits of His infinite satisfaction. Ask Mary to obtain for you the grace of great confidence in God's mercy, and the grace of a sincere hatred of sin.

March 29.

AFTER THE CRUCIFIXION.

I. WHILE the crowd that witnessed the harrowing scene of our Lord's crucifixion was gradually dispersing, preparation was being made for His burial. There came upon the scene 'a certain rich man,' who was a noble counsellor, but one who had not consented to the counsel and doings of the Chief Priests in seeking our Lord's death. This was Joseph of Arimathea, declared to be 'a good and a just man,' and 'a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews,' 'who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God.' With him was associated 'a ruler of the Jews,' named Nicodemus, who had come at night to our Lord perhaps three years previously, and had been instructed by Him. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes. The Gospel tells us that, after the opening of our Lord's sacred side, and when it was evening, Joseph went in boldly to Pilate and begged the Body of Jesus. Pilate was surprised to hear that our Lord was dead, and, having ascertained from the centurion that such was the case, he 'commanded that the Body should be delivered.' They took, therefore, the Body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices. The Gospel says: 'And Joseph, buying fine linen and taking Him down, wrapt Him up in the fine linen and laid Him in a sepulchre which was hewed out of a rock. And he rolled a stone to the door of the sepulchre.' This sepulchre was in a garden close by: it was Joseph's 'own new monument,' 'wherein no man yet had been laid.'

Devout Christian, admire the devotedness, care, and reverence displayed by these disciples in burying our Lord. Study with pious interest all the circumstances of the solemn and sorrowful scene.

II. We should recognize how, by a wise arrangement of Divine Providence, it was these two men of recognized high character and of distinguished position, and not the Apostles, to whom fell the disengaging of our Lord's sacred Body from the Cross, and the burial of it. Their testimony was unimpeachable. This wise arrangement left no room for a statement that the Apostles had attempted any kind of deception. There were also present at the burial, besides our Blessed Lady and St. John, the three Marys—Mary Magdalen, Mary the mother of St. James the Less and of Joseph, and Mary Salome, the wife of Zebedee and mother of St. James the Great and of St. John. The Gospel says : 'Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of Joseph beheld where He was laid. And returning, they prepared spices and ointments.' 'And the Sabbath drew on.' Let us ask for what purpose Joseph of Arimathea purchased the 'clean linen cloth' (St. Matt. xxvii. 59). We find it was to provide a winding-sheet for our Lord's most sacred Body. The linen was clean and fine ; it was of the best quality. Joseph did not shrink from the sorrowful task. He had to handle and carry our Saviour's most disfigured Body, and he had to witness the intense sorrow and suffering of the desolate Mother. Curious and scoffing unbelievers and malignant, exulting Chief Priests were still at hand. Joseph and Nicodemus were not deterred by the thought of any disfavour they might incur with the princes of the people, nor by any gibes from the unsympathetic and unmannerly onlookers.

Devout Christian, be ever firm and constant in fulfilling your religious duties. Be not guided by the neglect or apathy of others, but ever weigh your obligations by the letter and spirit of the law, and study always what will be pleasing to God and profitable to your own highest interests.

III. If we ask ourselves for what purpose Joseph of Arimathea bought the fine linen, we must say that this linen was to be used as a winding-sheet for our Lord's Body ; to cover that sacred Body which was offered for us on the Cross, to be its shroud. Taken down from the

Cross, it was seen to be a Body all disfigured with cruel wounds, bruises, piercings, and bleedings. The spectacle recalls the words of the prophet: 'From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there is no soundness therein; wounds and bruises, and swelling sores; they are not bound up, nor dressed, nor fomented with oil' (Isa. i. 6). Closed in death were now those sacred eyes which had cast the light of grace into so many darkened souls, which had given comforting assurance to the Magdalen and to so many sinners, and whose single glance had converted Peter. Silent were those sacred lips which had uttered so many luminous discourses and many sentences of pardon, whose last utterances had been the seven words spoken from the Cross. Cold and blank was then that holy countenance through which had beamed the human soul of a Divine Person. Pierced were the sacred hands, and feet, and side, with everlasting tokens of our Saviour's love. Notwithstanding the apparent unsightliness, the silent mourners display the tenderest care and reverence, for it is the Body of Jesus.

Devout Christian, let your soul be clean and pure to receive this same Body in Holy Communion. Dispose yourself for so great a sacrament with due reverence and devotion. Commemorate with the same dispositions the events of the sacred Passion. Ask Mary, the Mother of Dolours, who with wounded soul witnessed the spectacle you have been considering, to obtain for you a lasting love of her crucified Son.

March 30.

'THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN SUFFERETH VIOLENCE'—I.

I. CHRISTIANS who enjoy true peace and satisfaction of soul are those who ever wear their armour and carry their weapons with them. Others who give themselves to pleasure and repose find only a false peace, and they are often overcome by the enemies of their soul. There must always be spiritual combat in this life. The holy Psalmist who asks, 'Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place?' answers himself, saying: 'The innocent in hands and clean of heart, who hath not taken his soul in vain' (Ps. xxiii.). We learn from these inspired words that we have something to do if we would reach Heaven. Many men, alas! would appear to have received their soul in vain, because they make little or no effort to fulfil the conditions of salvation. Instead of fighting in a Christian manner the battle of life, instead of availing themselves of the means and helps to salvation which are provided for them, and instead of seeking to correspond with grace, many men, indifferent to religion, seem to wish to leave everything to God. They deceive themselves, where deception may prove fatal to their salvation. They would do well to reflect on St. Paul's words: 'With fear and trembling work out your salvation' (Phil. ii. 12).

Devout Christian, be resolved never to slacken your efforts to secure your salvation. Men who succeed in every other pursuit, but who fail in this, have received their soul in vain. Many men look now for a repose which belongs to the future, and which will be the reward of labour, strife, patience, and religiousness. Our Lord has said: 'The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away' (St. Matt. xi. 12).

II. Men who make little or no effort to control and correct their evil inclinations cannot be said to do themselves the violence which the attainment of the heavenly reward demands. Heaven is a kingdom into which nothing defiled can enter. Sloth, evil passion, spiritual indifference, worldly gain, or personal waywardness, must give place, and must be overcome, when there is question of God's demands upon our obedience, or of the fulfilment of the necessary conditions of salvation. At no time, and under no circumstances, should we fall short in our compliance with those necessary conditions. It is not for us to seek to alter them ; nor is it for us to disregard or to change the laws and conditions of life and of human society which have been established by the Divine Law-giver. The injunctions of God's law, and the precepts of His Church, should always be sacred in our eyes, and we should ever obey them willingly and fully. Like the Saints now crowned in glory, we should employ our energies, time, and talents in doing all that God demands of us. This will not be detrimental to success in our temporal affairs ; but, on the contrary, it will bring God's blessing upon them, and it will lead us to attend to them in such a way as not to cause any impediment to the work of our sanctification.

Devout Christian, continue to do violence to every irregular inclination. Life should be a history of acts of violence done to evil tendencies in the mind and heart, and to every kind of waywardness opposed to God's most holy and perfect will and command.

III. St. Paul gives us an admirable example of the violence which wins Heaven. His labours and sufferings (2 Cor. xi. 23) astonish us. He tells us that he ran in the race, ' not as at an uncertainty,' and that he fought in the supreme contest ' not as one beating the air ' (1 Cor. ix. 26). In labouring for our salvation, there must not be any fatal neglect, any unconcern, any unworthy cowardice, or any shirking of the conditions. As the labour should be life-long, we must not defer complying with its demands. In the case of men who have unhappily fallen from grace by the commission of grievous sin, they cannot begin too soon

to do the necessary violence to themselves which true conversion demands. They must not put off their conversion. To do so would be to neglect the grace of God's merciful call to repentance, and it may be withdrawn, never to be offered again. Let us, then, be convinced that Heaven is a reward which must be earned by a good life. The lesson taught by our Lord, that some men may be called even at the eleventh hour, does not warrant any man to delay answering the call when it reaches him earlier. The heavenly reward is not usually attained by one bold stroke, but by dint of constant, persevering endeavour. This endeavour is rewarded in this life with a sense of spiritual comfort and of hopeful assurance.

Devout Christian, remember in the battle of life that you are every day drawing nearer to its end and to the attainment of the reward. Be not surprised or disheartened if your life is beset with many temptations and various trials. These are intended by God's Providence as an occasion of greater merit. Look to Mary, your heavenly Protectress, for the help of her intercession in the strifes and difficulties of life, and study the lesson of her patience and steadfastness.

March 31.

'THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN SUFFERETH VIOLENCE'—II.

I. THE conditions of salvation do not admit of inactivity and neglect. Something has to be done, and properly done. Moreover, there must ever be contest against opposing forces. If we fail to resist their assaults, we shall be overcome. We must do violence to our own sloth and self-will, to our inactivity, and to our misdirected activity. Often self-will would lead us everywhere except in the right path. We are, perhaps, naturally opposed to a just restraint and control, or ready to busy ourselves about everything but what duty demands. Do we not meet with men who spend much time in doing what is of very little use, but who begrudge the time demanded by duty or piety? A due violence must be done to our self-will to correct it. Especially should this violence be employed when there is question of correcting our usual failings. We must use endeavour in dealing with them; we must be on the watch, not to indulge them, as so many men do, but to overcome them; and we must avoid what we know to be the occasion of our falls. There is a kind of cowardice which shuns effort and sacrifice. Victory does not fall to cowards.

Devout Christian, do not repine under temptations and difficulties, and do not weary of the contest. Your self-will must be controlled, or it will prove your greatest enemy. You must ever maintain the warfare against every evil passion. How sad is the case of men who are deluded and overcome! St. James says: 'Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured' (i. 14).

II. Opposed to the kingdom of Heaven is that of this world. If we would not be deceived and allured by the

world's false maxims, and by its vain attractions, we must be staunch in upholding the true principles of Christianity, and in fulfilling the duties of a truly Christian life. This line of conduct may at times clash with the ideas and expectations of the society in which we move ; but even then we must not show weakness or fickleness. Our Lord said : ' A man's enemies shall be they of his own household.' We must do violence in resisting our friends when, in matter of display, vanity, useless pleasure, or dissipation, they would have us do what would displease our only Lord and Master. We must not be actuated in our conduct by what the world expects of us, or by what the world may say, but by what will be right in God's eyes. With God is the everlasting reward ; but what can the world give us when to please it we offend God ? St. John says : ' The world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof. But he that doth the will of God abideth for ever ' (1 St. John ii. 17). Our Lord said : ' My kingdom is not of this world ' (St. John xviii. 36) ; his followers therefore should not be imbued with the spirit of worldliness. They should resist every attempt on the part of the world to encroach on the perfect liberty with which they should serve God.

Devout Christian, you have, in Baptism and often since, given your allegiance to Christ. Be faithful in your service. Be not like those who once said : ' We have no king but Cæsar ' (St. John xix. 15) ; and who wickedly rejected the heavenly King Who had come to save them. The vain, fitful, and unspiritual world will not lift up your soul to heavenly things, but will lead you to disregard them. It cannot give you everlasting rewards, but only passing gains which perish.

III. St. Paul says : ' Take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day ' (Eph. vi. 13). He teaches us that in dealing with the assaults of Satan we must meet violence with equal force. Satan would snatch Heaven from us. He can succeed in this only by the delusiveness or violence of his temptations. He will not, however, succeed in his efforts if we remain on the watch, if we oppose to his deceits the holy teachings of

the Gospel, if we strive ever to follow the wisdom of the Spirit, and if we resist him with prayer and a holy persistancy. 'Whom resist ye,' says St. Peter, 'strong in faith.' Those, however, who are supine and dilatory, whose mind is like an open course for every kind of thought, and who do not carefully guard their heart against every access of evil, will very likely fail to use the needed violence against the enemy, and they will be overcome. They will not at once cry out, 'Begone, Satan!' (St. Matt. iv. 10), nor will they at once humbly implore God's help against the tempter. There is also another kind of violence which we must use if we would 'bear away' the kingdom of Heaven. We must importune God with our supplications; we must not cease to use the means of obtaining grace; we must be active in our charity. If we do these things, grace will produce fruit in our souls to strengthen us against evil, and to lead us with constant effort to what is wise and profitable. Under its inspiration, and borne on by its efficacy, we shall direct our steps to the everlasting kingdom.

Devout Christian, dwell sometimes on the meaning of the words: 'The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away.' Pray for grace to employ all the violence which so great a gain demands. Ask Mary, the heavenly Queen, to obtain for you understanding to perceive the forces which fight against you, and spiritual strength to overcome them. The heavenly reward will more than recompense you for the loss of earthly favour, and for the holy earnestness which the spiritual contest will demand.

April 1.

'THEREFORE DOTH THE FATHER LOVE ME.'

I. INEXPRESSIBLE because incomprehensible is the love of God the Father for His Son, and, for His sake, for us. We can only contemplate this love with reverent awe and admiration. How is it manifested in the accomplishment of the mystery of our redemption? Our Lord seems to answer this question where He says: 'Therefore doth the Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again' (St. John x. 17). When we study these words, we note the display of wisdom and justice in the Divine ordinance which demanded the sacrifice of our Saviour's life. Our Lord goes on to say: 'No man taketh it away from Me: but I lay it down Myself, and I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of My Father.' It is God, we see, Who commands the sacrifice, and it is also God Who obeys the command; for what man has power to take up his life again? The Father loves the Son because of His willing obedience. He loves Him, and, in justice to His Son, He wisely ordains that the humiliations and sufferings involved in His sacrifice shall be more than compensated by a glorious and triumphant Resurrection. The Son rises again to enjoy the fruits of His sacrifice, and the everlasting love of His Father. He rises again to see us also partake of the fruits of His death, and to receive throughout endless ages our gratitude, love, and service. The Eternal Father loves us also; for if He commanded His Son's death, it was for our sake, that we may attain to everlasting life (St. John iii. 16).

Devout Christian, recognize the admirable ways of Divine love, and God's right to your undying love. Be filled with

wonder, and be comforted, at the thought of your being the object of God's love.

II. We recognize God's love of us, but do we love Him in return? Our Lord teaches us to make this return. He manifested His love for the Eternal Father by the character of His obedience. It is said by our Lord to us: 'If you love Me, keep My commandments' (St. John xiv. 15). This was the test of His own love of the Father. He entered into all the designs and wishes of His Father, even to laying down His life. 'This commandment have I received of My Father'; He obeyed it. He knew the perfection of His Father's will and ordinances, and the immensity of His charity. He knew also why He was commanded to lay down His life—that it was for our salvation. This teaching is revealed in our Lord's own words: 'As the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father: and I lay down my life for My sheep' (St. John x. 15). Has He learned from His Father thus to embrace us in His incomparable love? We hear Him say: 'As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you' (St. John xv. 9). His death was with His own perfect consent, and out of pure love for us (Eph. v. 2). If He suffered in His Passion, it was for our sake; and if His Resurrection was glorious, it was so for us, as well as for Himself. The sufferings of His Passion reconcile us to the trials of the present life, and His glorious Resurrection makes the future golden with joyous hopes.

Devout Christian, as the Eternal Father loves you, so also does the Son love you. The Father wished His Son to die for you; so, too, did the Son Himself wish to die for you. His enemies would have been powerless to seize Him and put Him to death if He Himself had not wished it. His taking up His life again signified the restoration to man of the life of grace, and of the means of justification, and the gift anew to man of immortality. Strive to give daily testimony of your love and gratitude.

III. What a debt of gratitude is due to God for His love of us! Happy shall we be if we have a true, practical love of God! Our Lord invites us to love Himself.

'Abide in My love.' If we do love Him, what comfort we may derive from the assurance He gave His Apostles: 'The Father Himself loveth you, because you have loved Me'! (St. John xvi. 27). But we shall not be exempt from suffering. What has been decreed for the Divine Son applies in some measure to us. We must lay down our life that we may receive it again. We are God's adopted children, and we must now endure the humiliations and sufferings of this present life, and close our career with death. These trials will, however, be more than compensated by the future glory which our Heavenly Father will bestow upon us (Rom. viii. 18). This commandment, then, we have received of our Father, and in imitation of our loving Saviour we must obey it. We should submit ourselves to the dispensation of earthly trials appointed for us, and thus testify to our love of God.

Devout Christian, view the trials of life in the light of our Lord's example and teaching. Then will they have their true value in your eyes; then will you regard them as tokens to you of your Heavenly Father's love, and you may say: 'Therefore doth the Father love me, because He asks of me my life, that He may restore it to me at the resurrection of the dead in the brightness and glory of His elect.' Beg of Mary, the faithful Protectress of all her clients, to obtain for you the grace ever to abide in God's love, even in the midst of adversity, and to live ever buoyed up by a firm trust in the wisdom, justice, and goodness of all God's loving designs in your regard.

April 2.

'HE IS RISEN: HE IS NOT HERE.'

I. Our Lord's Resurrection is an event to be commemorated with religious joy. We may say with David: 'Let the Heavens rejoice; and let the earth be glad' (Ps. xcv. 11); for the Blessed in Heaven, as well as Christians on earth, have reason to be happy upon our Lord's rising from the tomb to take possession of His everlasting inheritance. The presence in Heaven of the Sacred Humanity—that is, of the Word of God clothed in our human nature which He has assumed and united to His Divine Nature—affords the Angels a new object for their worship and for their happiness. On Easter Day Christ, as the Son of Man, rose from the dead in a body then enjoying the qualities with which It was to ascend to take possession of the kingdom of Heaven. Therefore should the Angels rejoice in the Resurrection. Let the earth, too, be glad. Let the ever-blessed Mother of Jesus, the Apostles, and all the Faithful, rejoice in the same consoling and most glorious event; for they see again the object of their hopes alive and endowed with immortality. Let the Church rejoice, for her heavenly Spouse, Christ, the Son of the Living God, has risen in His majesty, beauty, power, and glory. He is no longer numbered among the dead, but He has entered into everlasting life; and now she knows that He has espoused her unto Himself in espousals that shall never be broken off (Osee ii. 19).

Devout Christian, join with Holy Church in singing the Easter 'Alleluias.' Lift up your soul to Christ your Saviour with joy and fervent praise.

II. St. Matthew tells us that an Angel of the Lord, whose countenance was as lightning, and whose raiment was as snow, descended from Heaven and rolled back the

stone of our Lord's sepulchre and sat upon it; and that for fear of him the guards set to watch the sepulchre were struck with terror, and became as dead men. When Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Joseph arrived on the scene, the Angel said to them: 'Fear not you: for I know that you seek Jesus Who was crucified. He is not here, for He is risen, as He said. Come and see the place where the Lord was laid. And going quickly, tell ye His disciples that He is risen: and behold He will go before you into Galilee: there you shall see Him. Lo, I have foretold it to you.' The same message was sent to the disciples by our Lord Himself; for as the holy women were hastening with fear and great joy from the sepulchre, Jesus met them, and they coming up to Him, held His sacred feet, and adored Him. This was only one of the first apparitions of our Lord after His Resurrection. He was still the same loving Lord and Master, the same sweet and gentle Friend, that He ever had been to His friends and disciples. With what love, confidence, and joy He inspired them!

Devout Christian, picture to yourself the wonderful events which surround this fundamental mystery of the Christian faith. Join with Mary, with the Apostles, and with the holy women, in worshipping our Lord in His new risen life, and declare yourself His sworn servant.

III. Man viewed death with terror and dismay. Many men said there is nothing more after death. They said death is as the last chapter of man's existence; there is no rising again. They regarded death as a great reality with nothing beyond it. This unbelief deprived life of true value, because it closed it in within narrow limits and robbed it of hope. It took away from man true healthiness of mind, and all stimulus to nobility of action. But there is a resurrection. Our Lord's manifest Resurrection crushes and annihilates any denial of man's future resurrection. Unbelievers are confounded. At the same time, true believers are comforted and are confirmed in faith. Every word of our Lord's stands. St. Paul said: 'If Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain' (1 Cor. xv. 17).

Christ's enemies thought to destroy the lustre of His miraculous works by the ignominy of a malefactor's death ; they determined by death to take Him from among the living, hoping to hush for ever the sound of His Name, and to obliterate from the face of the earth the very memory of Him. But, O glorious Victory ! He lives again, and His Name shall be worshipped throughout the world until the end of all time.

Devout Christian, rejoice in our Lord's exaltation, and pray that His kingdom may spread, and that our Lord may hold sway over all minds and hearts. Pray to Mary to obtain for you grace to aspire to a more perfect life, and to reap more abundantly the fruits of her Divine Son's Resurrection.

April 3.

OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION—I.

I. The crucifixion and entombment of our Lord closed the scenes of His humiliations. On the morning of the third day following our Lord rose again. This is the Divine mystery concerning which St. Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, saying: 'Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the sorrows of Hell, as it was impossible that He should be holden by it. For David saith concerning Him 'I foresaw the Lord before my face: because He is at my right hand that I may not be moved. For this my heart hath been glad, and my tongue hath rejoiced: moreover, my flesh also shall rest in hope. Because Thou wilt not leave My soul in Hell, nor suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption' (Acts ii. 24-27). The day of the Resurrection was the dawn and the beginning of the glorious day of our Lord's everlasting triumph. The time of ignominy, weakness, and suffering had passed; He entered upon His new and unending life of peace, rest, and glory. At different times, in various places, and in different manners, during forty days, our Lord appeared to His Apostles and disciples, affording them ample proof of the reality of His Resurrection; and finally, leading the Apostles to Bethany, He ascended into Heaven in their sight.

Devout Christian, renew your faith in the glorious mystery of your Saviour's Resurrection, attested by the appointed witnesses, and believed by every generation of true Christians. 'The third day He rose again from the dead.' Weakness yields to strength, humiliation yields to glory, suffering and anguish yield to impassibility and joy, death yields to life, and mortality yields to immortality. Our Lord's triumph is complete.

II. Our Lord's soul was outside the range of the malice

of His enemies, but our Lord had put His Body in their power during the scenes of His sacred Passion. He said to them : ' This is your hour, and the power of darkness ' (St. Luke xxii. 53). His enemies spent upon His sacred Body all their malice, leaving no part of it sound, but wounding it all over, and finally nailing it to the Cross. Christ triumphed in that same Body in His Resurrection ; for It rose again endowed with impassibility and immortality, and now in Heaven, beautiful in its magnificence. It is enshrined in everlasting glory. Our Christian hope is enkindled and confirmed by this mystery, and by this triumph ; for St. Paul says : ' Now Christ is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep. For by a man came death, and by a Man the resurrection of the dead ' (1 Cor. xv. 20, 21). This body of ours, which suffers from many infirmities and from many ravages of sin, will not always be in weakness and dishonour : it will rise again endowed with strength, beauty, agility, and immortality. After its resurrection it shall never again see corruption.

Devout Christian, continue to embrace with assiduity and constancy the holy and wise discipline of a virtuous life. Let the spirit ever maintain the mastery over the flesh. Pray for grace to keep in subjection every unruly passion, to practise Christian self-denial, to be faithful to the duties of religion, and to be patient and courageous under the Cross, that, triumphing now over human infirmity, your body may share in due measure in the final and everlasting triumph.

III. Our Lord, by His death on the Cross, satisfied for sin (1 St. Pet. ii. 24) ; His glorious Resurrection confirmed His triumph over sin. Through sin death came into the world. Whether we wish it or not, we must die ; and the time of our death is hidden from us. Let unbelieving philosophers explain this. We must die because of sin (Rom. v. 12 ; Heb. ix. 27), and the Divine Judge of the living and the dead appoints the time when we must submit to the penalty of death. Is not sin, then, our common enemy ? Shall we fall before it, or shall we triumph over it ? We are to share in our Lord's triumph ; our souls,

snatched from the power of Satan, are to be the trophies of His victory. Our Lord suffered in His soul that our soul may receive grace. St. Paul says : ' Now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end life everlasting ' (Rom. vi. 22). Our Lord triumphed in His soul, which should never again experience sorrow or anguish, that our soul may enjoy the gift of sanctification now, and may hereafter receive life everlasting in peace and joy.

Devout Christian, ever take more care of your soul than of your body. Ever regard mortal sin as the obstacle to a glorious resurrection. Let the work of your sanctification be your first care. Pray to Mary Immaculate, your heavenly Pattern and Protectress, to obtain for you grace to triumph over sin, and so to live that you may not fear death.

April 4.

OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION—II.

I. THE prophet Osee foretold our Lord's triumph over death when he wrote: 'I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy death' (Osee xiii. 14). What do we see in our Lord's Resurrection? Our Lord, by His own Divine power, rises from the dead. Body and soul are reunited. Our Lord really died: He really lives again. This is according to His own prophecy several times repeated (St. Matt. xvi. 21; xvii. 9, 22; xx. 19). His magnificent triumph, in which we are to share, and which has its spiritual signification, is spoken of by St. Paul, where he says: 'If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall live also together with Christ. Knowing that Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over Him' (Rom. vi. 8, 9). Our Lord's return to life is not for a time only; it is a return to a new, perfect, glorious, and everlasting life. A triumph like this, accomplished by His own Divine power, is unprecedented and incomparable. Shake off, O Christ and loving Saviour of men, the shackles of death and the winding clothes of the tomb. Rise in the irresistibility of Thy Divine might, in the charms of Thy heavenly beauty, in the lustre of Thy eternal glory, and in the freedom and joyousness of man's regained immortality.

Devout Christian, embrace in spirit the feet of your risen Saviour. Be resolved to cling to Him even in the midst of the shadows of death; that you may never in this life experience the spiritual death resulting from mortal sin, and may escape the doom of the damned, which is everlasting death (Wis. iv. 19).

II. Christ's victory over death is a comforting pledge of ours. It is certain that we must die, for the empire of

death is universal; it extends over all men; but we shall rise again, and then death shall no longer have dominion over us. It is true that we dread death; but we recognize, thanks to our Lord's victory, that its dominion is only transient, for mortality shall put on immortality (1 Cor. xv. 53). Moreover, our Lord through His victory lessens our dread of death, and surrounds the Christian death-bed with the consolations of hope. We do not die as 'others who have no hope' (1 Thess. iv. 12). We by faith see through and beyond the gates of death, and we discern the bright light of a glorious and happy immortality. Therefore does St. Peter say: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His great mercy hath regenerated us unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead' (1 St. Pet. i. 3). 'Who,' as St. Paul says, 'was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification' (Rom. iv. 25). Our Lord, then, died and rose again, that we may have life—the life of grace here, and the life of glory hereafter (1 Cor. xv. 22). Animated with this hope, Christians display energy, fervour, and courage in their spiritual life, knowing that their lives are not in vain, and ever aspiring to a glorious crown beyond the grave.

Devout Christian, renew your faith in the mystery of the Resurrection, and in its lessons. Admire the dispensations of mercy and love revealed in all our Lord's works in connection with the Redemption, and say confidently with David: 'I will not fear thousands of the people surrounding me. Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God' (Ps. iii. 7).

III. When we call to mind that God in the beginning appointed death as the penalty of man's disobedience (Gen. ii. 17), it should not surprise us that our Divine Saviour, Who came to repair man's fall, triumphed over death. St. Paul says: 'Because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner hath been partaker of the same: that through death He might destroy him who had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil' (Heb. ii. 14). His triumph in the Resurrec-

tion will be followed by ours in our resurrection; and of this final triumph St. Paul says: 'When this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?' (1 Cor. xv. 54, 55). Our faith in this final triumph is as a bright and consoling light shining in the gloom which has settled on mankind since the Fall. Our faith is the same as that of holy Job, who long before the Resurrection of our Saviour said: 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth' (Job xix. 25). How irresistible is our Lord's claim to our gratitude and love, for His having so perfectly and so triumphantly repaired man's fall from original justice! Not impenitent sinners, but the just, will share in His triumph and attain to a glorious immortality.

Devout Christian, rejoice in our Lord's victory over death. Rightly does Holy Church sing her 'Alleluias,' when she commemorates an event so glorious for our Lord Himself, and for all His true followers. Rejoice with Mary, whose loving heart was comforted beyond measure by the Resurrection of her Son, and ask by means of her intercession the grace never through sin to lose peace and joy of soul.

April 5.

LESSONS OF THE RESURRECTION—I.

I. The Resurrection convinces us of our Lord's Divinity. That anyone should raise himself by his own power from the tomb, that he should trample death itself underfoot, that he should in a new life clothe himself with the same body, but changed and enjoying all the qualities of a glorified body—not only is this a thing unheard of except in the case of our Lord, but it is also a thing impossible save only to God. It happened at our Lord's Resurrection, and we proclaim it a Divine prodigy. We see in His Resurrection the destructible clothing of our mortality cast aside, and the unchanging and everlasting garment of immortality assumed. We see the passage effected from the dull, changeable lights of earthly vision to the unfading brilliancy of heavenly glory, into which, however, our Lord delayed to enter until His Ascension. We see the irrevocable step taken from the earthly scene of labour and suffering, and from the darkness of the tomb, to an abiding state and condition of sweetest repose and unceasing bliss. O admirable and glorious Resurrection, how it establishes the truth of our Lord's Divinity!

Listen, devout Christian, to the Angel's words addressed to the holy women who took precious spices to the tomb: 'Be not afrighted: you seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified: He is risen, He is not here.' Be filled with joy. Jesus is God: He has risen from the dead. The Father's words are confirmed: 'This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased.' Say with David: 'I will extol Thee, O God my King: and I will bless Thy Name for ever' (Ps. cxliv. 1).

II. Christ, risen now from the dead, departing from men's vision, prepares to enter into everlasting repose in

His Eternal Father's bosom. Let us lift up our gaze to this mysterious spectacle, and seek to shake off all worldliness of spirit, that our soul may find its repose in God. St. Paul says: 'You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God' (Col. iii. 3). While still held by the bonds of the flesh, and dwelling amongst men on earth, we must not allow our affections to lead us astray from the only true object of the creature's love—namely, God Himself. We are invited to God's everlasting embrace. We cannot respond unless, through God's mercy and grace, we rise from grievous sin, and extricate ourselves from any snares that have entrapped our souls, and strive effectively to avoid them for the future. Poor sinner, let not the grave-clothes and the tomb, let not sins and bad habits, hold you in unworthy and fatal bondage. Lift yourself up by prayer, and shake off your sins by sincere repentance. Burst forth from the dark tomb, in life renewed in God's grace, and in fervour and spiritual activity restored, that Christ your Lord may reap in you the fruits of His sacred Passion and Death, and may associate you hereafter with Himself in the glories of His Resurrection.

Devout Christian, learn from our Lord's Resurrection how to lift up your soul, in its love and desires, above all inordinate affection for creatures, and for those earthly attractions which hold captive so many hearts. 'Sursum cor'—Lift up your heart in constant affection to God.

III. St. Paul invites us to a spiritual resurrection where he says: 'That as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His Resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer' (Rom. vi. 4-6). There must be a permanence in our adhesion to Christ through grace. We must not fall back into habits or courses of sin. We must not assume again those shackles of moral slavery from which Christ delivered us through His death; but we must, in conformity with the likeness of His Resurrection,

ever retain the new life which we have received through His grace. The Resurrection, then, of our Saviour teaches us to persevere in God's grace. We must give signs of spiritual life by exactitude in observing God's law, by avoiding what is evil and unbecoming in disciples of Christ, and by the practice of piety. When there are no tokens of religiousness, its reality may reasonably be questioned. Tokens of it may be perceived in the visage, conversation, and manner of life, of God's true servants.

Devout Christian, while carefully avoiding every kind of hypocrisy, let not evidences of real piety be absent from your conversations and conduct. Let your service of God be genuine and constant. Beseech Mary, your heavenly Protectress, to obtain for you grace to profit by the lessons taught by the Resurrection of her Divine Son, that you may ever adhere to Christ with a firm faith in His Divinity and by a constant effort to walk in the light of His teaching.

April 6.

LESSONS OF THE RESURRECTION—II.

I. The commemoration of our Lord's Resurrection takes us back in thought to the bright Easter Day which followed His crucifixion; but it has also its lesson for the future. It carries our minds forward to the day of the general resurrection; for St. Paul says: 'But now Christ is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep' (1 Cor. xv. 20). His Resurrection should be regarded as a guarantee of ours. 'As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.' Because our Lord rose by His own Divine power from the tomb, we believe what He foretold when He said: 'The hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment' (St. John v. 28, 29). All men, then, the just and the wicked, shall rise again. We know this because God has revealed it; and if we seek for a token to confirm our belief in this mystery, we have it in the Resurrection of our Lord. Christ has risen; this we firmly believe. We shall rise again; this, too, we believe, and we look forward with confidence to the day of our resurrection. The manner of our Lord's Resurrection is, to the just, a consoling assurance as to the manner of theirs. St. John says: 'We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him' (1 St. John iii. 2).

Devout Christian, thank your loving Saviour for the comfort which your soul experiences when you reflect upon the glory of the resurrection of the just. Then shall all your sorrows, infirmities, and humiliations have passed by for ever. St. Peter says: 'According to His great mercy

God hath regenerated us unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead' (1 St. Pet. i. 3).

II. Our Lord's Resurrection teaches us the lesson of God's consolations and recompense, prepared for His servants who submit themselves dutifully and patiently to the crosses He is pleased to send them. Our Lord Himself, speaking of His sufferings and humiliations which preceded His Resurrection, said: 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?' (St. Luke xxiv. 26). The Heavenly Father chastens His children by the sorrows of this present life, to prepare them for the glory that is to follow. But when these sorrows have passed, He recompenses them with joys that shall never end. They enter, body and soul, into possession of these joys by a glorious resurrection. The clouds and storms of our earthly trials obscure for a time the brightness and peace of the heavenly recompense, but when our day of trial shall have closed, there will succeed a day that shall have no end, in which Christ our Lord will gather together His elect in the Kingdom of His Father. For a time we must seem to hate our bodies, and therefore must we practise self-denial. We must check the dangerous proclivities of fallen nature, and moderate our zest for worldly pleasures. St. Paul says: 'If you live according to the flesh, you shall die. But if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live' (Rom. viii. 13). We must be valiant and patient in the present contest until the day of battle is over; and then, if we shall have been faithful, we shall put on immortality, and receive an everlasting crown.

Devout Christian, show your confidence in the Divine dispensations by the patience with which you embrace the cross which it pleases God to impose upon you now, and ever console yourself with the hope of the future recompense which you look for, both at your death and on the day of the general resurrection.

III. If our Lord rose again to enjoy the fruits of His Passion and death, and to receive our grateful service and praise, He rose also to take account with the wicked who

despise His love and mercy. Upon the day of the general resurrection, 'He shall come to judge the living and the dead.' From His judgment there shall be no appeal, and the sentence He shall then pass will be irrevocable. Say, O sinners, if you are prepared to answer for yourselves at the dread tribunal? Have you believed in Christ with a firm and practical faith? Have you observed all things whatsoever He has commanded? (St. Matt. xxviii. 20). Have you been grateful for the Divine benefit of Redemption? Have you availed yourselves of the means of salvation? Have you, with the help of the grace of your Saviour, overcome evil passions and resisted wicked temptations? Have you rendered to God a dutiful service? If you have not done these things, what sentence must the most just Judge pass upon you? Can the Eternal Father permit His most beloved Son's infinite satisfactions and most precious Blood to be despised with impunity? While the just have worked out their salvation with fear and trembling, what effort have you made to save your souls?

Devout Christian, cling with grateful devotedness to the service of your loving Saviour, and you will not fall under the condemnation which shall be passed upon the wicked when He shall sit in judgment. Let the lessons of our Lord's Resurrection draw you with yet stronger bonds to His love and honourable service. Ask Mary, your heavenly Queen and Mother, to obtain for you wisdom to guide your steps in the holy way that leads to a glorious resurrection.

April 7.

SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION.

I. The Holy Ghost and the Church invite us to learn spiritual lessons from the mysteries of our faith. Thus St. Paul says that we should even now rise with Christ, and he tells us how we should act if we be thus risen. 'If you be risen with Christ,' he says, 'seek the things that are above' (Col. iii. 1). He tells us to put away from us all the things that are evil, and to pursue the things that are good, 'stripping ourselves of the old man with his deeds.' When our Lord had risen, the first proof that fell under the eyes of the holy women who had hastened to the sepulchre was that the heavy stone which enclosed the tomb had been rolled back. In our spiritual resurrection the heavy stone of mortal sin must be removed by sincere repentance. If we be in mortal sin, there will be no rising unless by sorrow and repentance. What are the evidences of grace? They are many; for instance, attraction for piety, readiness to do good, spiritual vigour, healthy spiritual instincts and aspirations, and careful avoidance of evil. These evidences are not witnessed where mortal sin has deprived the soul of grace. Mortal sin destroys its spiritual life of sanctifying grace, impedes its spiritual action, leaves it without the power of meriting any heavenly reward, and exposes it to the power and machinations of the devil. God loves the works of His hands, He calls to repentance, He wishes to be once more loved and served by men fallen into mortal sin, and He invites them to arise.

Devout Christian, admire God's patience with sinners, and the tenderness of His mercy and compassion. Excite in yourself a horror of mortal sin. Continue to pursue with assiduity the paths of virtue and piety.

II. When our Lord had risen the tomb was open. It

was no longer the dwelling-place of the dead. The holy women entered into the sepulchre (St. Mark xvi. 5). 'Going in, they found not the Body of the Lord Jesus' (St. Luke xxiv. 3). There had been a true Resurrection. The Body of our Lord in death was a figure of the soul in the state of mortal sin; but in the Resurrection it represented the soul in the state of grace. In a true spiritual resurrection, the sinner having, in the course of his repentance, opened his heart and conscience, no longer remains dead in the tomb of sin. He comes forth, enjoying the life of sanctifying grace, and the peace of a holy reconciliation with God. He is now prepared to listen to God's Word, to follow the impulses of grace, to keep God's commandments, to speak to God in prayer, and to his neighbour in charity, and to walk in the way of a truly Christian life. He is no longer dead, but living. Alas! that so many men make no effort to rise from the tomb of sin! When they become indifferent to their condition, only a very extraordinary grace will move them; and who shall say if such a grace will ever be granted them? To them may be referred God's words: 'With their ears they have been dull of hearing, and their eyes they have shut: lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted' (St. Matt. xiii. 15).

Devout Christian, lament the sad state of men who take no steps to rise again spiritually, and continue your prayers for the conversion of sinners. Rejoice in the merciful dispensations of Providence, which bring about so many conversions. Pray for grace never to fall into mortal sin, for it is written: 'He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall' (1 Cor. x. 12).

III. When St. Peter and St. John reached the sepulchre they found the grave-clothes lying about (St. John xx. 5-7). This was another evidence of our Lord's Resurrection. When Lazarus was called back from death, he came from the vault with his hands, feet, and face bound round with cloths, and he was not free until these cloths had been removed. Our Lord's sacred Body was free when the linen cloths that bound it had been cast aside. Sin has its

ties and bonds ; they must be cast aside in every true conversion. Some conversions are not true and permanent, because men will not strive to break off from their bad habits ; because they will not break away from dangerous associations, or because they will not discontinue resorting to places which have been the occasion of their falling into sin. These habits, associations, and places are the grave-bands which fetter the soul. They are sometimes in men's own hearts, and sometimes in their surroundings. Men must contend with, and control, their own evil tendencies, and they must avoid exterior occasions of sin. This is required in every spiritual resurrection.

Devout Christian, take care not to suffer your soul to be brought under bondage to what is evil. Watch over the avenues of your heart, and persevere in giving first attention to your spiritual welfare. Beseech Mary, your heavenly Protectress, to obtain for you grace not to fall under the seduction of evil influences, and to prize above every other friendship the friendship and service of God.

April 8.

THE TRIUMPHS OF GRACE.

I. After our Lord's humiliations and sufferings there followed the glorious triumph of His Resurrection. To us this represents our triumphs, and it is a comforting assurance of them. These triumphs are effected by our Saviour's grace and power. Not in vain, then, are we members of His mystic Body, and associated with Him in God's mysterious designs and decrees. Man's high destiny is to triumph. This destiny was bestowed upon him from the beginning; it was renewed and ratified through the Incarnation and Redemption, and it will yet be consummated in the glorious and everlasting future state. If we would triumph, we must be united to Christ by grace. St. Paul says: 'Thanks be to God, Who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. xv. 57); 'Thanks be to God, Who always maketh us to triumph in Christ Jesus' (2 Cor. ii. 14). United by grace to Christ, we are supported by His power, and we are sharers in His triumphs. No temptation will then overcome us, no commandment will be too difficult of accomplishment, no sorrow will utterly prostrate us, and nothing will separate us from God. Grace, by its Divine efficacy, will sustain us in the warfare of life, and will finally crown our efforts with victory.

Devout Christian, be resolved to avail yourself, with earnest but prudent zeal, of the many means by which you may increase sanctifying grace in your soul, and secure for yourself the constant flow of actual graces.

II. Through grace the Christian must triumph over his deadly enemy, Satan. Satan will have no power over those who have a lively faith, and who have at the same time true and fervent love of God in their hearts. St. Paul says: 'In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may

be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked One ' (Eph. vi. 16). Through grace the Christian must also triumph over sin. Our Lord gave His very life to secure this triumph for us. Through Him we rise from spiritual death to spiritual life ; for through Him we are called to sanctification, no longer to do the works of sin, but works meritorious of the heavenly reward. Where Christ's grace reigns, there sin is resisted, the ways of sin are avoided, sin is not loved but hated, and it no longer dominates over the soul. St. Paul says : ' Our old man is crucified with Him that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer ' (Rom. vi. 6). Away from Christ, and deprived of His grace, men are weak ; they fall into many errors and disorders. If they are not subject to Christ, they will fall under the dominion of the devil, the world, and the flesh.

Devout Christian, you will be strong and you will be victorious while you cling with constant fidelity to the service of your Divine Master, Who is ever to you a loving Father. Do not permit yourself to be deceived or seduced by Satan's wiles, or by any of the allurements of evil.

III. Through grace the Christian must triumph over the weaknesses of corrupt nature. Our evil inclinations are our own domestic enemy, and they offer a serious obstacle to our salvation. Often, alas ! because men do not combat these debasing proclivities, fatal consequences ensue—even sin, scandal, sacrilege, and damnation. Grace will enable us to practise moral restraint and self-denial, and to persevere courageously in combating our evil inclinations. Finally, through grace, the Christian must triumph over the world. The spirit, ways, and allurements of the world exercise a pernicious influence over the unwary. We must know how far, and in what way, the world has its claims upon our service, and we must not allow it to encroach upon the time and duties which we owe to God and to our own immortal soul. What are the riches, pleasures, gains, and distinctions offered by the world in comparison with God's spiritual gifts and the heavenly reward ? What is its friendship in comparison with the friendship of Christ our Lord ?

Devout Christian, view with sorrow the sad case of many who do not triumph with Christ, but who cast in their lot with the wicked. Pray for grace to persevere in the ways of a devout life, that you may attain to the heavenly crown. Be firm in your religious principles, and despise every kind of gain that would be accompanied by the danger of losing the precious treasure of Divine grace. Place yourself with loving confidence under Mary's care, and pray daily for her protection.

April 9.

THE FIVE PRECIOUS WOUNDS.

I. When our Lord appeared to His Apostles after His Resurrection, he showed them His sacred Wounds (St. Luke xxiv. 39, 40 ; St. John xx. 20). St. Thomas would not believe in the Resurrection unless he saw and touched those Wounds. There must be a mystery in this. Why the Wounds ? We may say that they were evidence of the reality of our Lord's sacred Humanity, that they were tokens of His love, since they told the history of His Passion, and that they were also glorious trophies of His victory. We must not forget those sacred and precious Wounds, endured for us. If we draw near by our spirit of devotion to our Lord, shall we fail to see those saving Wounds ? They should speak to our hearts, and they should teach us many lessons. Our devotion, to be pleasing to our Lord, must ever savour of the Passion ; for He came amongst us to suffer for us, and He wills that His sufferings should be ever remembered and commemorated. Does not St. Paul teach us to cultivate this element in our devotion ? He said : ' I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ : and Him crucified ' (1 Cor. ii. 2). And does not our Lord bear ever in His sacred Person the marks of the five precious Wounds, as if He wished them never to be forgotten ?

Devout Christian, salute with tender devotion your Saviour's sacred Wounds. Ponder on the prophet's words : ' What are these Wounds in the midst of Thy hands ? . . . With these I was wounded in the house of them that love me ' (Zach. xiii. 6). O saving Wounds, wound my poor, cold heart with love, and draw it to sorrow for sin, and to steadiness in the ways of piety.

II. The five Wounds, so beautiful now in our Saviour's

glorified Body, were very different in the hours of His sacred Passion. Who shall say what our Lord suffered when the cruel nails were driven through His hands and feet? How racking, burning, and agonizing was the pain they caused Him while He hung on the Cross! We contemplate with horror the tearing of the flesh, the straining of the sinews, and the flowing of the blood. Ah, at what a price we have been redeemed! By what cruel sufferings our Lord would prove His love of us! If we saw a stranger thus wounded, would not our sympathy go out to him? But if it was our own brother, would not our sympathy make us wholly forget ourselves? What, then, should our feelings be when we recognize in the sufferer our Divine Lord and Master, our tenderest Redeemer, our most loving Brother, the beloved Son of the Heavenly Father and of the ever-blessed Mary, our immaculate Mother? O Jesus, we compassionate Thee; we fain would offer our own miserable bodies to take those Wounds and to suffer those pains. But those Wounds are too precious. Through them our mortal enemies are overcome; through them our souls are saved; through them we are to attain to the everlasting kingdom.

Devout Christian, let it be your prayer that unceasing honour may be given to those precious Wounds. Look upon them with tender devotion, and reflect upon the words of the prophet: 'They shall look upon Me, Whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son, and they shall grieve over Him, as the manner is to grieve for the death of the first-born' (Zach. xii. 10).

III. Hail, saving Wounds! sources of comfort and of hope! These Wounds were endured for us, and their infinite merits are made over to us. It is written: 'He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed' (Isa. liii. 5). Through our Saviour's precious Wounds we have shaken off the yoke of Satan, our daily sins are forgiven, and we shall yet be numbered among the Saints. Now are we strong, now are we rich,

now are we blessed. Let us sing joyfully with David: 'Pray ye for the things that are for the peace of Jerusalem: and abundance for them that love thee. Let peace be in thy strength, and abundance in thy towers' (Ps. cxxi. 6, 7). O comforting love of our Saviour! all earthly affections cannot compare with it. The sacred Wounds prove this love, and they also endear our Lord to us. 'In this we have known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us' (1 St. John iii. 16). The sight of the precious Wounds touches the sinner, and reassures him upon his repentance; and it gives unction to the soul of the just, comforting it, and supporting it, in this land of exile, temptation, labour, and sorrow.

Devout Christian, if you enjoy peace now, if you rejoice now, and if you look confidently for everlasting joy in the world to come, you owe it all to the Wounds your loving Saviour endured for you. What would life be if you did not know that He loves you? Those precious Wounds tell you that He ever loves you. Ask Mary, your tender Mother, who gazed upon those Wounds while they were bleeding on the Cross, and who gazes on them now resplendent as they are in the glorified Humanity, to obtain for you a profitable spirit of devotion towards them, and grace ever to respond to your Saviour's love.

April 10.

CHRIST EVER LIVING IN HIS CHURCH.

I. Outside the Catholic Church, for the most part, there is only cherished the memory of our Lord and of His life and doctrine; so that the prevalent belief would appear to be that after the Ascension there ceased to be in the world any actual influence or exercise of Christ's power. Such is not the case in the Catholic Church, for Catholics ever recognize the reality of Christ's spiritual kingdom continued in the world from the day of the Ascension, ever living, and as firmly established now, after all these centuries, as when Christ founded it. Consequently Catholics recognize and honour those whom Christ sent, and the authority they wield in His Name, and that measure of His own Divine power with which He has commissioned them. Those whom St. Paul describes as 'the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God' (1 Cor. iv. 1) have not ceased to be with us; they will ever be among us to tend the souls of every generation of Christ's followers, and to direct us in the way of salvation. We reverence in them and in their ministry the Divine Lord in Whose Name they minister, and the continuance of His work of love and mercy for our consolation and salvation. Therefore do we submit ourselves to them, and eagerly avail ourselves of their ministrations.

Devout Christian, recognize that the ministry established by Christ did not die with the Apostles, but it lives on like Christ's eternal priesthood. Christ lives in the members of His mystical Body, and the work of His everlasting priesthood is perpetuated in the priesthood of His Church.

II. Wisely does Holy Church perpetuate the memory of our Lord and of His work by her seasons and festivals.

How instructive are not the festivals of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, and the seasons of Advent and Passiontide? Do they not keep us in constant remembrance of the sublime mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption? Our Lord thus lives again to us, year by year, and we keep fresh in our memory the events of His sacred life and holy teaching. We are thus familiarized with what our Lord has done for us, and we give expression in our devotions to the sentiments of love, confidence, and gratitude, which our realization of His works of beneficence and mercy gives rise to. There is, however, another way in which our Lord lives ever among us, besides this perpetual commemoration of the events of His life and works—namely, the way of His real, ever-abiding presence in the Holy Eucharist. Herein is a mystery hidden from the eyes of those who are outside the Church. It is the most cherished mystery within the Church, a mystery revealed to little ones (St. Matt. xi. 25). Catholics believe in the continual mystical repetition, upon the Altar, of the sacrifice of Calvary, different only in manner from that Divine sacrifice. Jesus is thus every day before them in the Eucharistic robes assumed by His sacred Humanity, offering before the throne of the Most High the most acceptable Sacrifice of His Body and Blood, and, moreover, dwelling in the holy tabernacle by His sacramental presence.

Devout Christian, to you Christ your Lord is ever in these ways abiding with you. Have you no duty to perform to Him? Will you not strive to enter always into the spirit of the Church's seasons and festivals? Will you not as often as possible assist at the Holy Mass and visit the Blessed Sacrament?

III. We see in the works of the holy ministry the exercise of Christ's power for our spiritual benefit. Christ is therefore most effectually living among us by the administrative works of His Divine power. In the ministry of the Word, His priests are His ambassadors, conveying to us His messages, enlightening us by delivering to us His holy teaching, warning and encouraging us, and moving us to penance and to newness of life. Our Lord said to His

Apostles : ' He that heareth you, heareth Me ' (St. Luke x. 16). ' And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words : going forth out of that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet ' (St. Matt. x. 14). Even as the ministers of the Crown, everyone in his own sphere, exercise the Sovereign's authority, so, too, is it with the duly ordained ministers of Christ. Christ has established His Church as a fold, and to His pastors has given suitable authority. We recognize that authority as His (St. John xxi. 15-17). Christ, furthermore, lives ever among us to impart His graces by the exercise of the priestly power. When we make thanksgiving after we have received the Holy Sacraments, our thanks are not rendered to the minister of the Sacrament, but to the Divine Lord Who has given us heavenly grace through His ministration. Christ is Author of the Sacraments, and of the graces they impart.

Devout Christian, see how constant are Christ's relations with you through His ever-living priesthood. Holy Church is called the Church of Christ, because He founded it, because it belongs to Him, and because He is ever living in it. Endeavour to realize the benefits of His providence for you through her work and ministry. Ask Mary, the holy Patroness of all Christ's followers, to obtain for you an ever devout attachment to her Divine Son and to His Church.

April 11.

THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH.

I. THE marvellous growth of the Church in a world held captive by vain superstitions and by many vices convinces us of her Divine origin, and of her grand and necessary mission. God gave the increase: He sent her to convey to the world the happy tidings of salvation. The world's superstitions were to give place to the true teaching of the Gospel, and its vices were to give place to the holiness of a Christian life. Our Lord foretold the growth of the Church in the parable of the grain of mustard seed (St. Matt. xiii. 31). How rapid the growth was! There were but a few disciples on the Day of Pentecost. Thirty years later St. Paul, writing to the Colossians (i. 6), declared that the Gospel was widespread: 'It is in the whole world, and bringeth forth fruit and groweth.' In the second century Tertullian declared that Christians were everywhere; and we know that during the first three centuries of the Christian era there were hundreds of thousands who gave their life for the faith. Their blood was the seed of the Church. Nothing could stay the growth of the Church, which became as a great tree spreading its branches over the whole face of the earth, outliving generation after generation, and dynasty after dynasty. She is the one tree that shall not be transplanted or destroyed. She is as vigorous now in her imperishable life as she was on the Day of Pentecost.

Devout Christian, renew your faith in the indefectibility of the Church. Pray often for the conversion of heretics and unbelievers. How many men, alas! spend their zeal for that which is not the true, unchanging, and indefectible Church planted by Christ, and invigorated and

preserved by the Holy Spirit! Our Lord said: 'Every plant which My Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up' (St. Matt. xv. 13).

II. It might appear that the very message conveyed by the Gospel would create a violent prejudice against it. And this, no doubt, was the case in many instances; for men were unwilling to abandon their superstitions and vices. For what do we find in the Gospel? We find deep mysteries, altogether above the reach of reason, and a system of religion quite opposed to the prevailing notions of those times. How unprepared was the pagan mind of Egyptians, Grecians, and Romans, accustomed to materialistic and pantheistic religions, for belief in the Divine Trinity, in the Incarnation, and in the Sacramental system, taught by the Church! How unprepared for the practice of self-denial, humility, meekness, purity, and charity, were men held captive by pride, ambition, and sensuality! Yet the Gospel inculcates not only faith in all revealed truths, but also the practice of Christian virtues. To the pagan mind its code of morals must have appeared severe and uninviting. The Jewish mind was, in its own way, equally prejudiced against the acceptance of the Gospel; for the Gospel was to supersede the Law and its peculiar rites and observances, and it condemned the hypocrisy and avarice of the Jews, and many of their social customs. Seeing, then, what were the prevailing ideas and customs of those times, we must admit that the teachings of the Gospel would meet with the greatest opposition. Yet the Church made progress, and her growth has never been stayed by any power, human or Satanical. How do we explain this marvellous growth? The Church is a Divine institution; it must run on in its course and fulfil its mission. Our Lord said: 'The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it' (St. Matt. xvi. 18).

Devout Christian, thank God for making you a member of His one true Church, and a participator in the blessings which He bestows through her. Say with St. Paul: 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth' (Rom. i. 16).

III. We see further reason to marvel at the growth of the Church, when we proceed to consider the means employed for the diffusion of the Gospel and for the conversion of the world. We learn what the means were from St. Paul's words : 'The foolish things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the wise : and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the strong : and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, and things that are not, that He might bring to nought things that are' (1 Cor. i. 27, 28). Humble and illiterate fishermen were the appointed ambassadors of Christ to the world of empire, fashion, and renown. They used neither eloquence nor policy, and they were not supported by worldly influence or interest. They preached boldly Christ crucified and the gospel of self-denial. They were unacquainted with the style, figures, and persuasiveness of rhetoric, and they may have been uncultivated in manner as well as in speech. They were without funds to win over partisans and to further their mission in other ways. Rulers, statesmen, philosophers, and supporters of the prevailing religions, rose up against these men whom they despised as mean in appearance, and seeking to win their own followers to a vain superstition. Often was the cry raised : 'The Christians to the lions!' But, in spite of all, the Church grew. Signs and wonders marked its progress (St. Mark xvi. 17, 18, 20). The Apostles 'going forth preached everywhere : the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed.'

Devout Christian, praise God for the wonders wrought by the Church in every age. How glorious have been her victories, how marvellous her growth! Ask Mary, the Help of Christians, to obtain for you grace to profit by the lights and helps provided for you by her Divine Son in His Holy Church.

April 12.

OUR BLESSEDNESS IN THE CHURCH.

I. Our Lord said to the Apostles : ' Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see ' (St. Luke x. 23). The patriarchs and prophets had longed to see and hear the Messias ; but the Apostles were near His Person, chosen as His messengers and representatives, witnesses of His life and miracles, and recipients first-hand of His revelations. The Apostles have long since passed away ; but even to us may be addressed those same words: ' Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see.' Our eyes are not darkened by unbelief, nor are they obscured by the errors and misconceptions of heresy. Happily, we are blessed with the possession of the true faith, and, owing to circumstances which have called it forth, we enjoy that faith in its fullest development of doctrine and practice. The Apostles saw only the laying of the foundations of the majestic building, but we behold the Church in her glorious and world-wide splendour. Nations have submitted to her, and her worship goes up to Heaven from every land. We have seen the fulfilment of Christ's promises and prophecies. We have the records of the Church's triumphs, and of her persecutions ; and we see how perseveringly, persecuted by the world, but aided and protected by Heaven, she carries on her Divinely-given mission. We are happy and blessed in what we see, and we thank God for the consolation it affords us.

Devout Christian, rejoice in the blessings Divinely bestowed upon you in the Church. Be thankful to God Who has loved you, and ' called you . . . into His marvellous light ' (1 St. Pet. ii. 9). Jesus Christ is your Light, ' Whom, having not seen, you love : in Whom also now, though you

see Him not, you believe : and believing, shall rejoice with joy unspeakable ' (1 St. Pet. i. 8).

II. Our faith is our comfort. Happily, we have seen the blessing of faith spread among the nations. Alas ! in some lands many have lost the gift, and disunion, uncertainty, and dissatisfaction have resulted. The children of those who first erred from the truth ' have asked for bread, and there was none to break it unto them ' (Lam. iv. 4). The faith of the Church is as a clear-burning lamp lighting up the way. The evidences of its truth lie abundantly around, clearly distinguishable, if men will but look at them. That voice of Peter, which on the day of Pentecost dispelled the darkness of the minds of the assembled multitude from many lands gathered there in Jerusalem, is heard still, with its unmistakable impressiveness, teaching with infallible certainty the doctrine of our Saviour, and maintaining every tittle of it in the very purity with which it was revealed. We have received Christ's teaching through the appointed channel, and the fundamental truths of the Christian faith are deeply rooted in our Catholic hearts. We have seen our forefathers die for them, and we know how to value them. Yet, alas ! sometimes men are met with who, misguided in the ways of reaching the sources of Divine teaching, look for new ways. It should not surprise us if such as these make shipwreck concerning the faith (1 Tim. i. 19), and thereupon lose the blessedness which is the portion of men firm in ' the faith once delivered to the Saints ' (St. Jude i. 3).

Devout Christian, treasure the holy gift of faith. In receiving its teachings from Christ's ambassadors, be even as a little child. It is not for men to criticize Divine teaching, but only to believe. ' Blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it ' (St. Luke xi. 28).

III. We are blessed beyond those of the Old Law in the means of grace which Christ has established in His Church. These are chiefly the Holy Mass and the seven Sacraments. How wonderful is the power Divinely given of consecrating the Body and Blood of Christ ! How wonderful, too, is the power of binding and loosing left by Christ to the pastors

of His Church! By how much, therefore, must not the priesthood of the New Law surpass that of the Old Law! What was figurative under the former dispensation has passed away for ever, and has been succeeded by the realities therein foreshadowed. In the new dispensation these realities are the sources to men of rich and most abundant graces, the good things bequeathed to us by Christ's 'better testament' (Heb. vii. 22). So now, the blessings of Christ's dispensations for His followers having been so lavishly bestowed upon us, St. Paul exhorts us, saying: 'Let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith' (Heb. x. 22). In the light of this faith let us view the consoling lessons of God's love, mercy, and bounty preached to us by the altar, the communion rail, the confessional, and the priestly ministry at every death-bed; and let us thank God because of the things which it is granted to us to see.

Devout Christian, let the blessings enjoyed by true children of the Church move you to endeavour to prove yourself more worthy of them. Beseech Mary, your loving heavenly Mother, to obtain for you great confidence in God's bounty, and a relish for the spiritual blessings of Christ's loving dispensation.

April 13.

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE CHURCH.

I. We are happy and at peace in the bosom of the Catholic Church, and we praise the goodness of God Who watches over her destinies with so special a providence. This providence has been with her in the days of persecution, disruption, and opposition, and it is with her now. The promise of it has been given to her, for our Lord said: 'Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world' (St. Matt. xxviii. 20). There are, alas! many and conflicting religious sects, for outside the Church men are confused and at variance concerning what they ought to believe; but we have no such difficulty to contend with, because we recognize the one only Authority established in the world by our Saviour. We believe that 'the rock' upon which our Lord built His Church is Peter, and his successors in office—namely, the Sovereign Pontiffs, the Bishops of Rome. Our Lord said: 'Thou art Peter: and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven' (St. Matt. xvi. 18, 19). Not to any of the other Apostles, but only to St. Peter, were these or any such words addressed. We believe that through Peter, and that from this rock, as from Peter's ship (St. Luke v. 3), our Lord teaches the whole world. In other words, we believe that it is Divinely appointed that only from the Catholic Church, presided over by Peter's successor, are we to receive Christ's teaching. One of the Fathers of the Church has said: 'Where Peter is, there is the Church.'

Devout Christian, as the Church in its very infancy was known to be Christ's Church by the presence of St. Peter at its head, so to-day is only that Church to be acknow-

ledged as Christ's Church which has at its head St. Peter's successor in office. Thank God for this dispensation by which you are able to recognize His appointed teacher, and thank Him also for His special providence over the Church.

II. What are wanting in Churches and sects outside the Catholic Church are unity and authority. See the contrast. On the one hand you have the Catholic Church teaching in every age the same unvarying doctrine, worshipping God in the one Sacrifice of the Holy Mass, administering Christ's seven Sacraments, with her glorious hierarchy, and with an admirable union of priests and people in one fold under one supreme pastor. On the other hand you have a vast variety of Churches and sects, differing in creed and in practice, carried about by every wind of doctrine, taking up every new religious idea, 'as sheep going astray' (1 St. Pet. ii. 25), and having no semblance or pretence of unity, and no recognized living authority to bind them together and to clear up their doubts. In the Catholic Church we witness unity, but outside it we see only disunion, diversity, conflict, doubt, and uncertainty. Many earnest Christians outside the Church lament the unsatisfactoriness of their condition; but they do not see the remedy, and they attribute it to the necessity of the case, as though nothing else is to be expected. Without authority there will not be unity. Authority supposes a headship. In the Church this headship, with the authority, powers, and duty belonging to it, was given by our Lord to St. Peter. To this Apostle our Lord said: 'I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and thou being converted, confirm thy brethren' (St. Luke xxii. 32). The office confided to St. Peter is held and exercised by the Sovereign Pontiff.

Devout Christian, admire the unity in faith which exists in the Church among men of every nationality, calling, and character. In this we recognize the finger of God. The keystone to this unity is the bond of authority, the primacy and universal jurisdiction of the Sovereign Pontiff.

III. God has set His seal upon His Church—namely, the seal of miracles. These have been wrought in every age and in every nation ; and this is according to promise. By miracles God has marked His approval of the preachers of the Gospel, and of the doctrine they have taught ; and by them He has likewise testified to the sanctity of His servants in the Church. Our Lord said : 'These signs shall follow them that believe : in My Name they shall cast out devils : and they shall speak with new tongues : they shall take up serpents : and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them : they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover' (St. Mark xvi. 17, 18). Such miracles as these have been wrought, and even the dead have been brought to life. God does not give this power in support of error or fraud. But, apart from the testimony of miracles, the most striking proof of the truth of the Church is the eminent holiness of so many of her children. Who will not admire the exalted virtues of a St. Francis of Assisi, of a St. Vincent de Paul, of a St. Francis de Sales, of a St. Teresa ? The Church's calendar is resplendent with the names of glorious heroes, whose sanctified lives testify to the holiness of her teaching and of her offices in regard of her children.

Devout Christian, rejoice in the success of the Church in drawing souls to God. If miracles were still necessary to the Church's mission in the world, they would still be wrought among us ; but already has she proved her Divine mission, and her authority is firmly established. Submit yourself at all times, and loyally, to her authority. Pray to Mary, your loving heavenly Mother, to obtain for you a spirit of thorough devotedness to the Church and to the Sovereign Pontiff.

April 14.

SUBMISSION TO CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH.

I. Faith is necessary for salvation; we cannot therefore be rightly called just if we are men without faith. It is written: 'The just man liveth by faith' (Rom. i. 17). The author of faith is God, and it has for object God and the truths He has revealed. What would life be without faith, seeing that it is the foundation of all supernatural religion? Being a gratuitous gift of God, and one necessary for salvation, we must submit ourselves to its teaching, and comply with its demands. Faith tells us of another world; it reveals to us God's design in creating us; it explains the difficulties for the human mind which arise from the character of our present surroundings; it opens to the mind the knowledge of sublime mysteries and truths; it fills the heart with lofty aspirations and with spiritual consolations; it instigates to virtue and holy living; it sustains us, by its lessons, under the trials of the present life, and it cheers us with hope for the future. The chief articles of our faith are contained in the Apostles' Creed. When we read over what is therein contained, we see how essential it is that we should believe firmly all that appears in that Creed. But the two articles which bear mostly upon our spiritual life are belief in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Catholic Church. Jesus Christ teaches us concerning the Father and the Holy Ghost, and we learn the whole teaching of Jesus Christ through the Holy Catholic Church which He founded.

Devout Christian, pray for the gift of a lively faith, and let faith inspire your daily life. Perform all your works under this holy inspiration, ever avoiding evil, ever doing good, to the greater glory of God, as a faithful servant of Jesus Christ.

II. Jesus Christ is God manifested in the flesh. He came with all the power and authority which belong to the Divinity. We are all bound to believe in Him, and to submit ourselves to Him. Being God, He is Truth itself, and we are bound to believe all that He teaches—all the mysteries of our faith. We must believe in our Lord's Resurrection as firmly as we believe in His Incarnation, and we must believe in every one of the seven Sacraments, and in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Our guide in matters of faith is the Holy Catholic Church. Jesus Christ appointed her to impart to men in every generation His holy teaching. She speaks in His Name. Therefore must we believe all the mysteries proclaimed for our belief by the Church. She has in all ages been the living Witness to Christ. She is not a different Church from that of the Apostles, but one and the same Church, ever living, indefectible and infallible, and ever fulfilling her appointed mission. Our Lord said to the Apostles: 'As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you' (St. John xx. 21). As He would direct us to all truth through His Holy Spirit living in the Church, to disregard the teaching of the Church would be to disregard the teaching of Christ Himself. Therefore did our Lord say to His Apostles: 'He that heareth you, heareth Me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me' (St. Luke x. 16).

Devout Christian, praise the providence of God, Who has appointed the Church to be a sure channel by which His revealed truths may reach you. Submit yourself willingly and loyally to Christ and His Church in all matters of doctrine. Say with a lively and practical faith: 'I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord; and I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, and I submit myself to her Divinely-given authority in all matters of faith.'

III. There is a strict obligation on all men to submit themselves both to Christ and to His Church. It cannot be admitted that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world to teach the world, and that Christ appointed His Church to teach all nations in His Name, and that, notwithstanding this, men could rightly consider themselves

free to disregard this teaching. God, the Supreme Ruler, sends His Christ and His ambassadors to teach men the truths He has revealed ; this necessarily implies a strict obligation upon men to receive them, and to submit themselves to them. Our Lord said : ' God so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son ; that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting ' (St. John iii. 16 ; St. Mark xvi. 16). We shall perish if we do not believe. Happily, we know and feel this obligation of submission to the Church, which is our appointed teacher and guide in all that concerns religion. She teaches us what we have to believe, and what we have to do, if we would be saved. We are not therefore as sheep going astray, but the Good Shepherd has provided in the Church a sure guide, and the needed channels of grace, to enable us to fulfil our destiny and attain to life everlasting. How comforting to us it is that this is so ! How far, alas ! from the truth are those who say that it does not matter what we believe, or what Church we belong to ! Is it not written : ' One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all ' (Eph. iv. 5, 6) ?

Devout Christian, thank God that you are spared all anxiety as to what you should believe. Ever acknowledge the authority and Divine mission of the Church, and submit yourself dutifully to her. As she has ever witnessed to Christ in the dark ages of the past and in all ages, so will she be preserved to do so in the future, in spite of all the machinations of men. Beg of Mary, the heavenly Protectress of the Church, to obtain for you the grace of a sincere and lively faith.

April 15.

THE VOICE OF THE CHURCH.

I. CHRIST founded a Church which should be His throughout all time, and this Church should have a voice—a voice of unfailing truth and authority—which all men should listen to and obey. The Church has her sphere of action, and her mission to all nations; it is hers to speak to us in Christ's Name, to bring us the light of heavenly truth; and within her realm are those pastures of grace to which, in the Name of the Good Shepherd, she invites all the nations. There are various passages in the Holy Gospels and in the Epistles which teach us what the Church is to us. Thus we read: 'As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you' (St. John xx. 21); 'When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will teach you all truth' (xvi. 13); 'Going therefore teach ye all nations. . . . Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world' (St. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20); 'He that heareth you, heareth Me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me' (St. Luke x. 16); 'Tell the Church. And if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican' (St. Matt. xviii. 17). Of what Church does our Lord speak? He speaks of the one and only Church of which He ever spoke, the one mentioned in another passage: 'Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it' (St. Matt. xvi. 18). The Divine promise has been fulfilled. The Church of all ages has witnessed to Christ from the day of Pentecost (Acts ii.) until now, and she will continue her Apostolic work until the end of the world.

Devout Christian, remark how our Lord tells us so often

to hear the Church. He would not tell us to do this if hers was a false voice. Hers is the voice of truth to guide us in the way of truth to everlasting life.

II. To be members of the Church is to us the source of countless spiritual comforts and blessings. We are not, as St. Paul says, 'tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine' (Eph. iv. 14), nor do we walk in the uncertain and unsatisfactory light of doubt and misgiving concerning the truth; but we listen dutifully to the voice of the ever-living, indefectible, and unchanging Church which spoke by the mouth of the Apostles, and which has spoken ever since by the mouth of their lawful successors. In doing this we are doing what Christ Himself ordained, and our submission to the Church brings us blessings and rewards. Holy Church is not a human institution, nor is it a useless one; it is not as a mere ornamental fabric, nor as a form of government without laws or authority; but, founded by Christ to continue His Divine mission in the world to the end of time, it has received in all fulness from its heavenly Founder the light, power, and authority which its mission demands. Holy Church is that Kingdom of God in this world of which our Lord spoke in so many of His parables; and He Himself is its King and Ruler represented by its lawful pastors (Acts i. 3; St. Matt. xiii. 11, etc.). Therefore do Catholics recognize as coming from God the teaching and the laws of Holy Church; therefore do they reverence its voice, and speak with respect of its pastors. St. Paul says: 'Let the priests that rule well be esteemed worthy of double honour: especially they who labour in the word and doctrine' (1 Tim. v. 17).

Devout Christian, thank God for the grace of belief in the true Church, and ever listen dutifully to the teaching and guidance of its lawfully appointed pastors. Ever respect those through whose voice the teaching of the Church reaches you.

III. To disregard and despise the voice of the Church is to disregard and despise the voice of Christ, in Whose Name and by Whose authority she speaks and teaches. Her voice is therefore one of truth and of power, and her

teaching is ever the same message which was delivered by the Apostles. Through that voice we receive, as from Christ Himself, what must be to us our rule of faith and of morals. When in her Councils she makes her canons, declaring in clear language what her teaching is in these matters she binds us to receive it under pain of falling under her anathema or curse. In every land she teaches and exhorts the faithful, ruling over them not only with pastoral gentleness, but also with authoritative firmness. When St. Paul discoursed to the clergy of Ephesus, he said : ' I have not spared to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops, to rule the Church of God ' (Acts xx. 27, 28). From these words we learn that a responsibility rests upon the pastors of the Church to exercise a dutiful rule over the flock. Elsewhere the same Apostle said : ' Obey your prelates, and be subject to them. For they watch as being to render an account of your souls : that they may do this with joy, and not with grief ' (Heb. xiii. 17).

Devout Christian, ever acknowledge in the voice of the Church that of your Divine Master, through Whose authority she rules over you in spiritual matters. Ask Mary, the Comfortress and Protectress of the Church, to obtain for yourself the grace of devotedness to the Church, and for wanderers from the fold the grace to embrace the true faith.

April 16.

CHRIST, THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

I. Our Lord said: 'The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' (St. Luke xix. 10). He described His mission as the Good Shepherd. O God of infinite Majesty and Greatness, how much you have loved us! You have assumed our nature, and come on earth to die for our salvation; and you have said of yourself: 'I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep' (St. John x. 11). The prophecy has been fulfilled: 'Thus saith the Lord God: Behold I Myself will seek My sheep and will visit them. . . . And I will set up one Shepherd over them' (Ezech. xxxiv. 11, 23). In assuming the character of the Good Shepherd, our Lord would point out to us not only the works accomplished by Him for our salvation and spiritual welfare, but also the thoughtfulness of His providence, and the tenderness of His love and mercy. There are men who do good works ungraciously: our Lord expended Himself, even to the giving of His life, to benefit all mankind; and He did this for us, who were in a condition of utter powerlessness and hopelessness, with a loving condescension and fulness of tender charity so as to win our love as well as our gratitude. Who, then, will not love the Good Shepherd? In His character of the Good Shepherd our Lord hides from our view the grandeur of His Majesty, the terrors of His judgments, and everything that might inspire awe or dread, and He manifests Himself to us in all the devotedness and homeliness of a shepherd caring for his sheep. 'We are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand' (Ps. xciv. 7). Our Lord's words 'I am the Good Shepherd,' are a very revelation to us of our Lord's care of us, and of the tenderness displayed in His providence over us.

Devout Christian, ever bless the goodness of the Good Shepherd, and seek to avail yourself of the blessings pro-

vided for your spiritual well-being. These blessings are found in the fold of the Good Shepherd. Many men, alas! neglect them.

II. The Good Shepherd feeds His sheep and protects them. In prophecy it was written: 'I will feed them in the most fruitful pastures' (Ezech. xxxiv. 14). Our Lord feeds our minds with heavenly and consoling truths. All other science, without religious teaching, will not avail to salvation. Our Lord, in His prayer to His Heavenly Father, said: 'This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent' (St. John xvii. 3). This knowledge, and all the truths which belong to it, come to us from Christ, the Good Shepherd of our souls, Who provides everything necessary for the welfare and salvation of His followers. Our Lord's teaching captivates the highest intellects and the noblest hearts, and every mind and heart that listens to it and receives it. His teaching shines upon the mind as a bright sun of truth and justice. It instructs in all necessary spiritual doctrine, imparts lessons in every virtue, is a guide in all our difficulties, and prepares us for the fuller revelation and manifestation that is to follow. The Good Shepherd in this way supplies our soul with the food of a salutary and saving doctrine. He supplies His sheep also with pastures of heavenly grace. Grace is working among men in every state and condition of life, to support their spiritual life, and to strengthen them against all their spiritual enemies. It is the work of the Good Shepherd. But marvellous above all other provisions for nourishing our souls, is that Divine Sacrament in which the Good Shepherd becomes Himself our nourishment, feeding our soul with His own Body and Blood. No other shepherd has ever done anything like this.

Devout Christian, listen attentively to the voice of the Good Shepherd, and disregard every voice that would lead you away from Him. Only His doctrine can supply the needs of your soul for true and saving teaching. Pray constantly for grace, and frequent the Eucharistic Banquet, that your soul may have the needed nourishment for its spiritual life.

III. The light of true doctrine is a protection against error and unbelief, and grace is our protection against our spiritual enemies. In these ways, by His teaching and by His grace, does the Good Shepherd defend His sheep from the wolves—the wolves being Satan, wicked men, and our own evil passions. The wolves seek to injure the sheep by false teaching, false and unsafe principles, perversion of mind and heart, snares for virtue, the undermining of religion, and the delusive attraction of this world's riches and pleasures. If we keep near the Good Shepherd, and avail ourselves of the means of grace and salvation which He has provided for us, we shall triumph over our enemies. We remain near the Good Shepherd by leading a Christian life, and by being true and loyal children of the Church. Thus shall we be gathered together in the fold in a holy union of faith, charity, and religion. This is what our Lord signified when He said: 'They shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd' (St. John x. 16). Our Lord's true followers are not in many churches, with many differences of doctrine and religious practice, but in the one fold of the Holy Catholic Church. For this union Christ prayed when He said: 'Not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me: that all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee' (St. John xvii. 20, 21). At the Last Day there will be a separation of true believers and true servants of God from those who have wilfully been enemies to the faith and to God's law. Our Lord said: 'He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on His left' (St. Matt. xxv. 33).

Devout Christian, love the Good Shepherd with a true and constant charity, and trust yourself with confidence to the guidance of the pastors of the fold. Our Lord said of His sheep: 'A stranger they follow not, but fly from him, because they know not the voice of strangers' (St. John x. 5). Ask Mary, your heavenly Protectress, to obtain for you the grace of constancy in faith and in devotedness to the Church.

April 17.

'I KNOW MINE, AND MINE KNOW ME.'

I. THE Good Shepherd's knowledge of His sheep is one accompanied by every token of a loving Providence. He knows our wants, and He supplies them; He sees our wounds, and He binds them up. He says: 'I know Mine.' He has put on His sheep an invisible mark, the spiritual sign of redemption in His precious Blood. They receive this mark at Baptism: it is an indelible mark or character, betokening that they have been received into the fold of Christ; then does our Lord become their Father, Friend, and Protector. His sheep are known to Him individually, with all their dispositions, temptations, inclinations, failings, and needs. No sheep is lost in the crowd, or missed. We are not as sheep going astray without an owner. The Good Shepherd calls us, and we hear His voice; He loves us, and we are comforted by His love, and strive to return it. His voice is heard in interior inspirations and warnings and in the dictation of an enlightened conscience. It is heard, too, in the exterior voice of our authorized pastors and in useful lessons and example coming from devout and prudent superiors and neighbours. Our Lord makes His followers participators in the blessings of His redemption. Having, through love, sacrificed Himself once for them on the Cross, He continues and repeats this sacrifice daily on many altars in the Holy Mass. He does not weary of giving us tokens of His immense love.

Devout Christian, let it comfort you that our Lord knows you. Plead confidently for the favours you need or desire. The Good Shepherd will not disregard your petitions. 'Ask, and you shall receive.'

II. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep and guards them ; and they know Him, and look up to Him in their needs, and feel confident of His protection. Besides the interior graces which strengthen and comfort the soul, our Lord has also set His holy Angels over us, and appointed His Church to watch over the spiritual interests of the whole flock. Through these guardians and their offices in our regard, the flock of Christ is ever protected. The Angels of God never sleep, and His Church is ever vigilant. Our spiritual pastors warn us against dangers to faith and morality, and they exhort us to keep in the right path, and ever to direct our steps towards the heavenly fold. In some measure we all experience the protection which our Lord promised to His Church when He said: 'The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it' (St. Matt. xvi. 18). To our Lord, then, does the Church, and do all the faithful, turn as to the Good Shepherd in times of danger and in every necessity. The whole liturgy of the Church, and her many devotions, breathe a spirit of unbounded confidence in His power and goodness. Even the most wretched sinner feels that he will be heard. 'I know Mine, and Mine know Me.' We are His, and He rules us. Who, then, will be afraid to run to the arms of this Good Shepherd? Why, see, His hands and feet bear the marks of wounds borne so bravely and lovingly for us. He shows us His sacred Heart, and He says it is the Heart that has loved men so much. His tender voice, that instructs and guides us now in the pastures of piety, religion, and virtue, is the same that will hereafter call us to our everlasting reward. Oh, let us know no other ruler and guide.

Devout Christian, ever remember your duty of love, gratitude, and confidence in your relations with the Divine Shepherd of your soul. Do not wilfully expose yourself to the pernicious and seductive influences of false philosophy, erroneous religious systems, dangerous pleasures, or worldliness. These things are not within the fold of the Good Shepherd.

III. Our Lord's faithful followers, the good sheep, know Him, principally by the knowledge of His Divine character,

of His life and teaching, and of His work. And this knowledge inspires them in their own life, and leads to the practice of religion. Our Lord is to them not as a stranger or some hero of ancient times, but their ever-living Lord and Master, their Good Shepherd and true Friend. They think of Him, they pray to Him, they commemorate His life and works, they seek to please Him, and they long to be with Him. All this is the service our Lord demands of all of us, and by it are we to prove our fidelity and to merit our reward. His sheep, with all their needs, cares, and weaknesses, will not attach themselves to Him in vain, for He is the Good Shepherd. He says by His prophet : ' I will seek that which was lost : and that which was driven away, I will bring again : and I will bind up that which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was weak, and that which was fat and strong I will preserve ' (Ezech. xxxiv. 16). He is the Good Shepherd to all—to the devout, to the erring, and to the repentant. ' He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. . . . He goeth before them ' (St. John x. 3, 4). The Good Shepherd has other pastures besides those which He has prepared for our souls in this life. He invites us to the rich pastures of eternal delights in the heavenly fold. He has gone before us on earth carrying His cross ; He has gone before us into Heaven, and is crowned with glory and honour (Ps. viii. 6). We must follow him on earth, and follow Him into Heaven.

Devout Christian, never desert the Good Shepherd, Who has never deserted you. Hold fast to the true faith and to all its teaching, and cling ever to the holy practices of your religion. Ask Mary, the most faithful lover of Jesus, to obtain for you the grace to be ever a faithful follower of the Good Shepherd.

April 18.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND THE SINNER.

I. One of the parables which should touch the sinner's heart most effectually is that of the Good Shepherd and the Lost Sheep, in which are depicted God's dealings with the sinner. It pictures to us the Good Shepherd going in search of the lost sheep (St. Luke xv. 4). It displays to us His tenderness, patience, and forgivingness. The Almighty Creator does not despise the work of His hands ; the Divine Father does not abandon His erring child. Alas ! in the case of the persistent unrepentant sinner it is the creature who despises the Almighty Creator, and the erring child who abandons the Divine Father. Such undutiful and ungrateful conduct brings upon the sinner God's indignation, wrath, and punishment, and finally the sinner is for ever excluded from God's heavenly kingdom. If we study the conduct of the Good Shepherd, we see, in the first place, how He goes in search of the lost sheep, and draws near to it. He does not leave it in the distant and unwholesome pastures to which it has gone. The erring sinner is like the prodigal son who ' went abroad into a far country ' (St. Luke xv. 13) ; and like the Israelites, when by their sins they had cut themselves off from God's regard. We read in Isaias : ' Your iniquities have divided between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you ' (Isa. lix. 2). As it is man's greatest happiness to be in God's friendship, so it is his greatest misfortune to be at enmity with God. Oh, if only the sinner would exclaim with David : ' I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost : seek Thy servant ' (Ps. cxviii. 176) ! Grace with gentle whisperings assures the soul of the sinner that all is not lost, that the arms of the Good Shepherd are held out to

lift him up, and that all he has to do is to turn repentant to God.

Devout Christian, admire the ways of God's love and mercy. When our perversity has taken us away from God, He seeks us to bring us back. He says : ' Return to Me, and I will receive thee ' (Jer. iii. 1). Without His grace we would never return.

II. When the Good Shepherd has found the erring sinner, He looks upon him with no glance of anger, but with one of tender mercy, that reassures the sinner and renders the work of conversion easy. It was such a look that Jesus cast upon Peter when this Apostle had denied him. The Gospel tells us : ' The Lord turning looked on Peter. . . . And Peter going out wept bitterly ' (St. Luke xxii. 61, 62). The Good Shepherd's voice is one of solicitude for the erring sinner's return : it speaks to his mind and memory, instructing him and pointing out the error and evil of his ways, and the demands of the Divine Law ; it speaks to his conscience to inspire him with remorse ; and it speaks to his heart to fill him with a sense of his perversity and ingratitude, and to move him to love better things. The Good Shepherd comforts the erring sinner, bidding him to have confidence in God's infinite mercy, and in the infinite merits of his Divine Saviour. How silently, but effectively, speak to the sinner's soul the Crucifix, the Confessional, and the Altar ! How long will he be inattentive ? Presently he is won by the Good Shepherd's voice, won by so many expressions of love and assurances of mercy. Now does the Good Shepherd lift up the sheep, and ' lay it upon His shoulders, rejoicing ' (St. Luke xv. 5). He has saved the sinner from present and everlasting misery. The various steps of true conversion are now easily and quickly taken, and once more the erring sheep is back again in the fold.

Devout Christian, let it comfort you, and fill you with admiration, to note the Good Shepherd's demeanour and efforts, when men have basely disregarded the Divine Law and lost God's grace. How tender, patient, and forgiving is the Sacred Heart of the Good Shepherd !

III. When will the part of the Good Shepherd in winning

back the lost sheep be completed ? Will it come to an end in this life ? We may well ask these questions when we consider in how many ways God helps the erring sinner in his conversion, and how He strives to hold him to his good purposes after it. God does not wish to lose the fruits of His mercy and graces, but all the gain will be ours. While we remain in the state of grace we are rich, we are happy, and we are secure ; and for all this we are indebted to God's tender love and care. In our conversion, the merciful arms of the Good Shepherd stayed us in our evil course, and brought us back to better ways ; the precious blood of the Shepherd Who gave His life for His sheep (St. John x. 11) cleansed our soul from all sin, and the white garment of grace was put on it. All did not end there. Once more we felt the beating of the Sacred Heart, and charity kindled in our soul led us to love what was wise and good. In the change that was then effected the ways of sin became distasteful and abhorred, and Virtue claimed us among her lovers ; and our aims and desires, which had been worldly and vain, turned upwards, bearing us along the way of God's true service. Oh, let us not turn back. Let us not dissipate and cast from us the gifts we have received. Let us not alienate from us again the love of the Good Shepherd.

Devout Christian, recognize all that God's grace did for you when sin estranged you from Him. Persevere now in those ways which lead to the heavenly fold of the Good Shepherd. Purify your intentions and your desires, and cling to those pious practices which win for you special graces. Mary is the beloved Mother of the Good Shepherd. Ask her to obtain for you constancy in the love of what is pleasing to her Divine Son, and grace ever to obey the Good Shepherd's voice.

April 19.

THREEFOLD PEACE.

I. Man naturally desires a condition of peace and repose. Such a condition lies before the just in the everlasting future. Even in this life we may experience the blessing of peace ; but that it may be real there must be peace with God, with our neighbour, and with ourselves. Religion and virtue will secure it for us. We must, in the first place, be at peace with God. If we disregard God's law and His grace, we shall not enjoy peace ; for He cannot be at peace with rebels. 'Who hath resisted Him, and hath had peace ?' (Job ix. 4). While our conscience tells us that we are in the state of sin, the soul is troubled. We know how terrible would be God's anger if it were to burst upon us. Our Lord warns us concerning it, where He says : 'I will show you Whom to fear : fear ye Him Who, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into Hell' (St. Luke xii. 5). If, however, we are not conscious of having fallen into mortal sin, if we are faithful to the duties of religion and of our state in life, if we submit ourselves dutifully to God's appointments, and if we are resolute in avoiding the ways of evil, then will God bless our life and give us interior comfort. Then will our conscience be at ease, and we shall enjoy interior peace. As we shall find our true happiness in seeking to please God, this will cause us both present satisfaction and a lively hope for the life to come.

Devout Christian, despise everything that might cause you to lose God's friendship, and desire only what God wills in your regard. Then, whether in prosperity or adversity, your mind will know how to avoid all inordinate disturbance, and, blessed by God's favour, you will enjoy peace.

II. We must, in the second place, be at peace with our

neighbour. If we be not at peace with our neighbour, our mind will be disturbed, and we shall be deprived of the blessing of interior peace. Our Lord said to His disciples : ' Have peace among you ' (St. Mark ix. 49). St. Paul says : ' Let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts, wherein also you are called in one body ' (Col. iii. 15). In a body the members are not at war with each other ; neither should it be so among Christ's followers, for they are all members of His mystical body. Our Lord said : ' By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another ' (St. John xiii. 35). When such evil passions as hatred, jealousy, or envy, or self-interest, find place in our relations with our neighbour, there will be bitterness in our thoughts and words, and various unpleasantnesses, which will cause dissension and disunion. All this will militate against the enjoyment of interior peace. How different will the case be when we strive to think kindly of our neighbour, when we find a pleasure in rendering him little services, when we speak well of him, when we rejoice in his good fortune, and sympathize with him in his sorrows, and when we readily pardon him if he displeases us. When resentment, uncharitableness, and self-interest are absent, the way is prepared for peace, and this blessing will be experienced both by him and by us. In order to live in charity, we must exercise self-control, and we must manifest consideration for others, but consoling will be the reward of our effort in these directions.

Devout Christian, the cultivation of charity demands that we should do something to conciliate affection. We must be willing to overcome our own natural feelings, and we must satisfy the reasonable demands of our neighbour. If we disregard our neighbour's claims upon our good-will, and if we offend him, trouble will ensue, and our own interior peace will be lost.

III. Threefold peace demands, in the third place, that we should be at peace with ourselves. This will be the case when we hold our evil passions in due subjection, and when we meet the claims of duty in regard of God's law and of our state of life. In dealing with our evil inclina-

tions, we must not seek to make any compromise. If we give way to them, or even if we bargain with them, we fall under their sway. If we fall under the power of such evil passions as pride, avarice, lust, envy, anger, or intemperance, they will create disturbance in our mind and heart. The prophet says: 'The wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest' (Isa. lvii. 20). The more we give way to these turbulent forces, the further we depart from the ways of peace; for they agitate the soul, and create a spirit of unrest. While we neglect compliance with the claims of duty, there will be a sense of unsatisfactoriness about our condition which will render us incapable of possessing and enjoying peace. There cannot be true peace where the sense of security is absent, and it will be absent while we neglect our duty. To enjoy peace with ourselves, we must be resolved to correct and check our passions, and we must give effect to our resolution as soon as any rising of evil passion begins. Moreover, we must not be negligent in fulfilling the duties of our state. It is very important that we should seek God's help by being faithful to prayer, by avoiding whatever might instigate our passions, and by frequenting the Holy Sacraments. The spiritual man, who is detached from inordinate affection for what would gratify sensuality, enjoys interior peace.

Devout Christian, study the ways of this desirable threefold peace, how to obtain it, and how to preserve it. Pray to Mary, the perfect model of dutifulness and charity, to obtain for you a zeal for true interior peace.

April 20.

PEACE LOST THROUGH SIN.

I. THERE was a Divine order established by God at the creation of the world. When Eden was created it was there too. Adam and Eve experienced it, and their souls were not ruffled by any disturbance. Peace reigned in Eden until there appeared there the fatal disturbing element of sin. What sad havoc then resulted! The earth refused to yield fruit without man's labour to till it, except that it produced weeds and briars in profusion; ferocity entered into the nature of most of the animals, and they became to man a source of danger and alarm; the elements broke loose with disturbing forces; but, worse than all, there came a lamentable change over man's own heart and nature. As a result of sin, peace departed, and there began a war which should continue until the end of time. Man's hitherto just and noble will, and pure and holy sentiments and aspirations, were so far perverted as to tend to evil. The earthly Paradise was no longer the place for our First Parents, now fallen from grace; for it was created to be the abode of peace and virtue. Even as the rebel Angels were through sin cast out of the heavenly Paradise, so were our First Parents on account of their sin cast out of the earthly Paradise. The history of the Fall is the history, too, of the loss of peace. Adam, humbled in his punishment, might have said to God: 'There is no health in my flesh because of Thy wrath: there is no peace for my bones because of my sins' (Ps. xxxvii. 4).

Devout Christian, study the lessons taught by man's fall. The state of grace, with its joyousness, peace, and comfort, is as an earthly Paradise. Therein God's voice is heard, and His love is experienced. Therein, too, is peace of heart, more precious than all the treasures of the world.

Let the wayward will be confined to the path of rectitude, and let all evil passions be kept in subjection, lest sin be committed and peace be dissipated.

II. When the peace of Eden was lost, trouble and disorder invaded both soul and body. Man's body became subject to distressing sicknesses, diseases, sufferings, and weakness, and it had to embrace a condition allied to hardship and labour. Man's mind, gifted in creation with the light of every necessary and useful knowledge, and readily embracing truth, as well in the supernatural order as in the natural order, became liable to superstition, ignorance, and error. We may say, then, that in his mind darkness succeeded to light. Man's will, the seat of action, gifted in creation with a purpose to do everything pleasing to God, and strong in virtue, became restless and fickle, and prone to act perversely. Man's heart, the seat of the affections, gifted in creation with a perfect charity and with an attraction towards holiness, became liable to be inordinately enamoured of creatures, and to be drawn to love the riches, vanities, and pleasures of the world. While man's mind was enlightened by truth, his will set upon justice, and his heart inflamed with Divine charity, there was peace. But when sin came, with its devastating and corrupting consequences, peace was lost. In due time men peopled the world, and the seeds of the original disorder grew and multiplied, and the world became the scene of error, superstition, hatred, injustice, impurity, lying, intemperance, and every kind of vice and moral misery, together with ignorance, sufferings, sorrows, cares, calamities, and death. Why was all this? Because sin drove away peace. Peace is found only in company of charity, justice, patience, and godliness.

Devout Christian, bow humbly under God's punishment, experienced by you in the cares and miseries of this present life, and acknowledge the far-reaching consequences of sin. Love the ways of holy living that you may enjoy peace of heart. David said to God: 'Much peace have they that love Thy law' (Ps. cxviii. 165).

III. To enjoy true and lasting peace we must be in the

state of grace. The unbeliever who knows not God, or who turns his back on the truth, is devoid of that heavenly light which would afford him comfort, instruction, and guidance, and motives to fight against evil and to do good. Without that light, and owing to his errors and evil courses, the unbeliever does not taste the joys of true peace. The worldling who neglects the practice of religion is deprived of those spiritual helps which would make him secure in the midst of the dangers of the world, and keep his feet in the paths of virtue. Without those helps, being unarmed amidst many foes, and falling under the seduction of worldly and even of base pleasures, the worldling will not enjoy the blessing of interior peace. The sinner, in whatever state or calling he may be—be he rich or poor—who remains in mortal sin, having lost God's friendship, is in a condition of spiritual want and weakness (St. Luke xv. 14). Away from God, and laden with many sins, cut off from grace and from the heavenly inheritance, the sinner is a stranger to true peace. 'There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord' (Isa. xlviii. 22). Peace will not be found in riches or vanities, nor in following the vain desires and unruly affections of a worldly or sinful heart; it is the heritage of the children of grace. It is written: 'The work of justice shall be peace, and the service of justice quietness' (Isa. xxxii. 17).

Devout Christian, love the peace which comes, not from the world, but from God. Where mortal sin is, this peace cannot be. Lament the fatal blindness of men who are carried away by passing joys, and who give their heart rather to a deceitful world than to God. God is the giver of true and comforting peace; and this peace, tasted in some measure in this world, is an earnest of the gift and reward hereafter of everlasting peace. Ask Mary, sinless in all her life, to obtain for you the grace to correct your faultiness, and the gift of interior peace.

April 21.

OUR LORD, THE RESTORER OF PEACE.

I. Fallen man, deprived of the heavenly inheritance, and of the supernatural gifts and helps which were to bring him to it, looked up with confidence to Christ, and said: 'It is Thou that wilt restore my inheritance to me' (Ps. xv. 5). Our Lord, among other good things, restored to man the blessing of peace. At His coming there was announced 'peace to men of good-will' (St. Luke ii. 14). After our Lord had paid the price of our redemption, and had risen again from the dead, His greeting to His followers was: 'Peace be to you.' It was becoming that men should receive this dearly purchased blessing; for it is written that 'the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed' (Isa. liii. 5). Our spiritual portion now 'is not meat and drink; but justice, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost' (Rom. xiv. 17). Through our Lord we receive enlightenment, strength, and consolation, and these blessings afford us a solid and permanent peace. Through them a remedy is brought to repair the havoc caused by sin, and man is restored to the ways of truth, justice, and charity. To remedy the evil was beyond the power of man. God therefore sent His own beloved Son 'made in the likeness of men' (Phil. ii. 7), Who, when He came, fulfilled gloriously the mission of mercy and benevolence confided to Him, and left men richer in spiritual blessings than in the days before His coming. Therefore did St. Paul praise God, saying: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ' (Eph. i. 3).

Devout Christian, through Christ count upon receiving

the blessing of peace. Even in the midst of the battle of life, while you cling to our Lord, and strive to serve Him faithfully, your heart will taste and relish the gift of interior peace. Bless and thank God for the richness and abundance of the spiritual blessings which are your portion in Christ.

II. Our Lord's true teaching enlightens the mind, and dispels the darkness which came upon it through Adam's fall. While the darkness remained, there could not be true peace. But how comforting it is now to know that Christ as a Divine Teacher instructs us in all truth! St. John said of Him: 'That was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world' (St. John i. 9). His Divine teaching reaches us through His Church, appointed to teach all nations and every generation of men. The teaching of the Divine mysteries and of lessons of heavenly wisdom comforts the mind, and affords it its needed light and guidance. Our Lord, moreover, wins His followers from the ways of evil and from the power of Satan, and imparts spiritual strength to support them in life's battle, and to bring them to the everlasting heavenly reward. Without His grace men would be weak, and they would speedily be overcome by their spiritual enemies. Now, supported by grace, they may say with St. Paul: 'I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me' (Phil. iv. 13). If, then, man became weak through sin, he becomes strong through Christ, Who supports him with His grace. Grace is given him to will what God wills, and to seek to accomplish all that God demands of him. Aided by grace, man triumphs over Satan in his efforts to seduce him from God's service, and the aid of his Divine Protector gives him a sense of security. All this tends to bring him peace.

Devout Christian, rejoice in the enlightenment and strength which follow as fruits for mankind from the coming of our Lord, bringing to men the blessing of peace. 'Light is risen to the just, and joy to the right of heart' (Ps. xcvi. 11). 'The just shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow up like the cedar of Libanus' (Ps. xci. 13).

Praise God for these blessings of light and strength, and for the comfort they afford.

III. This present life is not without its miseries, but Christ our Lord has won for us many consolations (Phil. ii. 1), and through these we may yet experience peace. No misery comes to us from God, Who is goodness itself and the source of all good. Our miseries are a consequence of sin. Our Lord, in repairing man's fall, provides a remedy for all our ills. Many men, alas! look elsewhere than to Him for their consolation, and they lament their lot with bitterness because they find no satisfaction. Consoled by Christ's teaching and example, and by interior spiritual comfort, God's servants are not crushed by the trials, cares, and temptations incidental to the present life; but they say: 'Thy will be done.' Under the burden of their faultiness, they quickly seek God's forgiveness, assured that through Christ's infinite satisfactions and the grace of His institution it will be granted. It is written: 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins' (1 St. John i. 9). If tempted to fear and misgiving about the future, even then God's servants are not without their consolation, through Christ's death and resurrection; for St. Paul says: 'Death is swallowed up in victory' (1 Cor. xv. 54). All these assurances and consolations bring comfort and peace to our soul. It is written: 'Let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts' (Col. iii. 15).

Devout Christian, worship Christ as the Restorer of Peace, and thank Him in fervent prayer for this desirable blessing. Walk ever in the ways of piety and charity, and place your trust in God's bounty, mercy, and love. Then will you be rewarded by the comfort of heavenly peace. Ask Mary to thank Jesus in your behalf for bringing back mankind from the region of misery and despair to the fair land of peace and confidence.

April 22.

THE TWO STANDARDS.

I. Men are following either the standard of Christ or that of Satan. How different are these leaders, and the principles, ways, and rewards of each of them! Alas! the followers of Satan seem not to study and to know their sad condition and the misery which is before them. As Christians living up to the duties of a Christian life, 'we are the sons of God' (Rom. viii. 16); but if we become sinners we fall away from God and from Christ, Who came to take away the sin of the world (St. John i. 29). St. John says: 'You know that He appeared to take away our sins: and in Him there is no sin. . . . He that committeth sin is of the devil: for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God appeared, that He might destroy the works of the devil' (1 St. John iii. 5, 8). The Apostle in these words shows us who are the two leaders, and how they are opposed to one another. How evil is the condition of sinners, for in them the works of the devil are not destroyed! Happily, through God's love and mercy, we belong to Christ. He has purchased us with His precious Blood, and now we look to Him with confidence for our salvation, and for every good. How false, then, should we be, if we were to forsake His standard, and by an evil or irreligious life to go over to that of Satan! How miserable and unworthy is the conduct of sinners who do this, and who wound thereby the Sacred Heart of their Saviour, and turn to naught the fruits of the shedding of the precious Blood!

Devout Christian, ever stand firm under the guidance of your Divine Leader, Who deemed it all too little to give His life for your salvation; and ever detest the base ingratitude of sinners who follow the standard of Satan.

II. Christ is the leader of God's elect, and with Him is the whole host of Heaven. Our own interest and gratitude should bind us to His standard. He has wrested us from the power of Satan, and made us heirs of the kingdom of Heaven. For our sake He became lowly that we might be exalted, poor that we might be made rich, weak that we might be made strong, and mortal that we might attain to immortality. On His side the fight is just and holy, being a contest against all the powers of evil. The commands our Divine Leader gives are wise and holy, requiring us to avoid all evil, and to do what will make our lives just and peaceful. The reward of the contest is a glorious victory, and an everlasting heavenly crown. We must elect to fight under Christ, that we may be happy and safe now, and happy for evermore hereafter. St. Paul says: 'If by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live' (Rom. viii. 13). Satan has set up his standard, and with all his forces and wiles he carries on war with the followers of Christ. Satan has for object our injury. This is the case even when he promises present gain or satisfaction. Satan's warfare is eminently unjust and execrable, for it is waged in rebellion against the Supreme Being, and it is carried on to upset virtue and righteousness, and to establish the reign of iniquity. The behests of Satan are contrary to our better sentiments, and demand a yielding to passions and vices which lower our self-respect. The reward of our compliance is everlasting death, suffering, and dishonour.

Devout Christian, weigh well the conditions of the warfare under these two standards. Renew your love and fidelity in following your Divine Saviour and Redeemer. St. Paul says: 'If you live according to the flesh, you shall die.' Despise everything which may lead you away from the right standard.

III. Men devoid of religion, victims of vices and pernicious habits, disregardful of the duties of their state of life, seeking inordinately the riches and pleasures of the world, or burying their talent, by neglect of God's service and of the calls and motions of grace, thus separate them-

selves from the standard of Christ, and follow that of Satan. All these maliciously, but under some delusion, abandon God for some supposed gain or satisfaction ; but how exceedingly are they deceived ! Whereas they desire life and peace, they arrive finally at death and endless misery. Where is their service of God ? How can they expect the everlasting heavenly reward ? Our Lord has said : ' He that loveth his life shall lose it : and he that hateth his life in this world keepeth it unto life eternal. If any man minister to Me, let him follow Me : and where I am, there shall also My minister be ' (St. John xii. 25, 26). We must follow Christ, and serve Him with fidelity, zeal, and becomingness of life, if we would wish Him to recognize us as His true servants, and to bestow upon us the promised rewards. He has said : ' If any man minister to Me, him will My Father honour.' Does the testimony of our conscience satisfy us that we are following Christ's standard ? Is our life what is becoming a follower of Christ and a Son of God ? Do our thoughts, affections, sentiments, and actions bear witness to the earnestness of our service ?

Devout Christian, let Christ's teaching and example have due practical bearing on your manner of life, that our Lord may reckon you among His followers. St. Paul says : ' If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His ' (Rom. viii. 9). Beseech Mary, the Help of Christians, to obtain for you grace to bear your part faithfully in following the standard of her Divine Son, that you may be crowned with His elect.

April 23.

ST. GEORGE.

I. The Church invokes as its protectors against its enemies three military champions who gave their lives for the faith; these are St. George, St. Sebastian, and St. Maurice. Devotion to St. George in the East spread to the West. This glorious martyr gave his life for Christ in A.D. 303. History records that in the seventh century there were six churches dedicated to him in Constantinople and one in Rome, and that at that epoch devotion to him existed in France, and was widespread in England. Devotion to patron Saints is profitable in many ways. It helps to supernaturalize patriotism, which it sanctifies by the religious element it introduces into it; it takes our thoughts from the world we live in, to raise them to the other world of heavenly reward and glory; it instigates us to labour for our everlasting crown; and it obtains for us many helps as the fruit of the intercession of our heavenly patrons. We may say that the Saints are given to us to help us in the way of our sanctification and salvation, especially in two ways: the first, by the lessons to be derived from their teaching and example; and the second, by the assistance of their prayers.

Devout Christian, revere and love your own patron Saints and the patron Saints of your country. Strive to learn something of their lives, of the virtues which distinguished them, of the noble works they accomplished, and of their wise and holy sayings. The knowledge of these things will tend to endear your holy patrons to you, and to encourage you to lead a good life. Have confidence in their prayers, and frequently invoke their assistance and blessing.

II. It is recorded of St. George that he was born in

Cappadocia and that he became a soldier in the service of the Emperor Diocletian. History tells that upon an occasion it became known to the Emperor that St. George was a Christian, and that the Emperor strove to make him deny his faith. The effort was in vain. The Emperor then turned against him in anger, and ordered him to be tortured. St. George was stretched out, and a very heavy stone was rolled over his body to crush him. On the following day, as the Saint remained firm, his constancy was tried by fresh tortures. His body was lacerated by a wheel in which were fixed steel points. It is reported that while he was enduring this torture, he was comforted and encouraged by a voice from Heaven, saying : 'George, fear nothing, for I am with thee.' Some of the pagans who witnessed his admirable constancy were won to the faith. Taken to a pagan temple, St. George confounded the demons and extracted from them an acknowledgement of the true God. He closed his sufferings by decapitation. St. George is represented as a well-armed soldier piercing a dragon. This representation is figurative of the Saint's victory over Satan, and it should tend to inspire us with confidence in his intercession when our spiritual enemies would assault our faith or virtue. We learn from the constant practice of Catholics in every age and in every land to do honour to our patron Saints. St. George is worthy of our reverence, admiration, and love, as a true soldier of Christ.

Devout Christian, listen to St. Paul's exhortation: 'Take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect' (Eph. vi. 13). The Apostle declares that a Christian's protection is truth and justice. These are proof against the tyranny of princes, and against the seductions of the world.

III. St. George teaches us by his example to give God the first place in our thoughts and service. He obeyed his earthly monarch in all that was just, but not with any compromise of his duty to God. St. George teaches us to set highest value on spiritual and heavenly things. He

refused to give up his faith and to deny his religion, and he declined to forego the heavenly reward for any distinctions or other earthly considerations which the Emperor offered him. St. George teaches us that we must be prepared to suffer for Christ. The tortures to which he was condemned were to him only steps by which to mount to his throne. The instruments of these tortures were to him trophies of victory. How glorious was his death, endured not to acquire earthly glory or an earthly kingdom, but to win Heaven and everlasting bliss! The sceptre which Diocletian carried should be cast down and broken, but the palm of martyrdom which St. George took up should be carried in triumph in life eternal; for martyrdom leads through death to everlasting life. Let, then, Christians learn to suffer patiently and bravely whatever may befall them on account of their religion. Ignorance and bigotry often strike cruel blows, but they do not inflict tortures such as were borne by the martyrs.

Devout Christian, your conflict in this world will not be of long duration, but let it be honourably carried on. Be ever among the brave. Your spiritual enemies may be legion; but if God be with you, who shall be against you? Pray to Mary to obtain for you the grace of a steadfast faith. Let this be accompanied by fidelity to prayer, and by constant dutifulness.

April 24.

GROUNDS FOR HOPE IN GOD—I.

I. Christian hope is grounded on Christian faith. Christians hope in God because they firmly believe in His infinite Power, in His surpassing Wisdom, and in His unspeakable Goodness. Such hope is therefore a supernatural virtue; it is also a necessary virtue. St. Paul says: 'We are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope. For what a man seeth, why doth he hope for? But if we hope for that which we see not: we wait for it with patience' (Rom. viii. 24, 25). Christians would cease to hope if they had not faith in God's power to hear their prayers and to grant their petitions. They look to God for blessings both spiritual and temporal, for all things must come from His hands. The richest blessings are those of grace, by which men are to attain everlasting life. God both can and will give these to all who seek them with proper dispositions. St. Paul says: 'God is able to make all grace abound in you! that ye always having all sufficiency in all things may abound to every good work' (2 Cor. ix. 8). How vain, then, are the pleas of those Christians who pretend that their sad case is beyond every remedy, and who wickedly despair of their salvation; for God can save them.

Turn ever, devout Christian, with trustful hope and confidence, to God, from Whom you expect all the graces necessary for your salvation. He both can and will bestow them according to your needs. Cast yourself upon His omnipotent power, and He will not disappoint you.

II. Christians who are animated with trustful hope in God look to Him for grace to enable them to fulfil all justice and to persevere to the end. How comforting is such a hope! On the other hand, how gloomy is the soul

in which such a hope has no place! The sinner who despairs says it is impossible to avoid sin; the victim of vice declares that he cannot master it; the weak and irresolute pretend that they cannot continue the struggle and always fight the good fight. All these are wanting in the virtue of hope. If they think only of their own natural weakness, they have ample reason for despondency; but if they raise their eyes to contemplate God's power, they will be inspired with a sense of confidence. That power has been displayed in every age; it is seen in the triumphs of the Apostles, of the Martyrs, of holy Confessors and Virgins, and in the conversion of countless sinners; it is seen in the brilliant examples of faith and virtue recorded in the history of the Christian Church. Holy David took comfort from the thought of God's repeated succour of his nation in ages that were past, saying: 'In Thee have our fathers hoped: they have hoped, and Thou hast delivered them. They cried to Thee, and they were saved' (Ps. xxi. 5, 6). So let it be with all Christians.

Be careful, devout Christian, never to admit into your soul any misgiving or doubt concerning the means of avoiding mortal sin, or of working out your salvation, for God will always aid and protect you if you have trustful recourse to Him. Use, with confidence the words of David, saying: 'The Lord is my Helper and my Protector' (Ps. xxvii. 7).

III. Let Christians animate their confidence in God by the consideration of the display of His power witnessed in the creation. For the sake of man He produced by His only word the earth and the firmament and all wonders with which they are filled; and man, too, was in His mind when He brought into existence the bright and glorious Heaven of the Blessed, the beauty and riches of which are beyond all conception. By His almighty power were all these things created, and by the same Divine power are they preserved and maintained. What a source of comfort and of confidence to all Christians this display of God's power in man's behalf should ever prove! God is ever the same, and He will not fail those who hope in Him.

He will ever order and ordain all things for their welfare. His power will not fail them in their needs. Therefore does David address himself to God, saying : ' Let all them be glad that hope in Thee : they shall rejoice for ever, and Thou shalt dwell in them ' (Ps. v. 12). With what a mighty hand did not God deliver His people of old from the power of the Egyptians and bring them into the promised land ! With equal power will He deliver His servants who hope in Him from the snares and bondage of their spiritual enemies and bring them triumphantly to the promised kingdom of His glory.

Put away from you, devout Christian, all despondency, and ever have trustful recourse to God in all your difficulties and temptations. Admire and praise that Divine Power which has provided all things for man's benefit, and which has ever succoured God's servants. Beseech Mary to obtain for you an increase of the holy virtue of hope, that it may fill you with comfort and animate you with a spirit of devotedness in all that concerns your spiritual welfare.

April 25.

GROUNDS FOR HOPE IN GOD—II.

I. If Christians should build up their hope in God upon the foundation of faith in His almighty power, they must always remember that a surpassing Wisdom governs all His works, and directs them to a most perfect end. God cannot but act ever with an infinite wisdom, and ordain all things accordingly. Nothing can be too difficult or complicated for Him to set right. Men may advance as obstacles to faith or virtue the conflict between the flesh and the spirit, or between nature and grace, or the apparent difficulties existing between reason and faith, or the intricacies to be met with in the path of salvation; but the wisdom of God knows no difficulty and provides remedies for every evil. What a seemingly hopeless condition of affairs followed on the Fall of Man! Our first parents saw no way out of it. They had fallen from grace; they were victims of sin, dupes of Satan, and amenable to infinite justice, with nothing to offer to repair their fault or to free them from its terrible consequences. Then did God, in His surpassing wisdom, promise the Incarnation and Redemption, through which mysteries adequate satisfaction was to be offered to His own offended Majesty, and man's estate was to be restored to grace and to be, moreover, made exceedingly honourable. Well might holy David exclaim: 'How great are Thy works, O Lord! Thou hast made all things in wisdom' (Ps. ciii. 24).

Devout Christian, ever trust in the wisdom of God in all His appointments, for He can ever draw good out of evil. Cast all your care upon Him, believing that all His dispensations are for the best. Praise the wisdom of God in all His works, and take comfort from the wise and loving ways of His providence.

II. Christians, moreover, ground their hope in God upon their faith in His unspeakable goodness. Again and again we read in the Holy Scriptures the words : ' Give glory to the Lord, for He is good ' (Ps. cv. 1). Who will not trust the goodness and kindness of God ? He will ever support and protect His servants. How often, alas, in difficult circumstances men follow their own devices and break God's law, when they should remain dutiful to God and trust themselves to His infinite goodness ! By such mistrust they do not better their case, and they bring misery to their conscience. No matter what difficulties may arise, man's only sure help can come from the goodness of God. When, under the Old Law, His people cried to Him and trusted in Him, He sent them succour and relief ; it was only when they turned away from Him that He suffered them to meet with defeat and with shame. Christians must not confide in their own devices but in God's infinite goodness ; much less should they depend upon courses that are opposed to God's law for success. Recall David's words : ' Some trust in chariots and some in horses ; but we will call upon the Name of the Lord our God ' (Ps. xix. 8). The goodness of God will not disappoint those who firmly and constantly trust themselves to it. The holy writer says : ' My children, behold the generations of men : and know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded ' (Ecclus. ii. 11).

Devout Christian, let your hope in God be strengthened, seeing that He is not only infinite in power and wisdom but also in goodness. Praise and bless that infinite Goodness, which ceases not to pour itself out upon you, and desire ever to correspond with its demands, and with its claims to your love, confidence, and gratitude.

III. Christian hope built upon faith in God's power, wisdom, and goodness becomes as an anchor of salvation. Christians animated with it remain firm in their allegiance to God and in the fulfilment of duty, in the midst of the storms of life. With St. Paul they may say : ' For I know Whom I have believed ' (2 Tim. i. 12) ; ' I have learned in whatever state I am to be content therewith. . . . I can

do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me' (Phil. iv. 11, 13). St. Paul relied upon God's sustaining power, and submitted himself dutifully to God's appointments. He did not presume on God's mercy, nor did he despair of God's succour; but he held his soul in patience in the midst of labours, sufferings, and tribulations. St. Paul is thus a model for all Christians. Let them put away over-anxiety and misgiving; let them have recourse with great confidence to God in all their difficulties and anxieties, and let them in every serious sickness turn with special love and confidence and with resignation to Him in Whom they have trusted during life, beseeching Him to crown in His own good time the works of His mercy and beneficence. Christians who act thus will rest in security, casting their care upon Him whose universal sway rules over the destinies of His creatures, and Who both can and will sustain and comfort all who sincerely hope in Him.

Renew, devout Christian, your assurance in the Divine Protection and in the goodness of His unceasing Providence. And turn to Mary to beg her ever to plead to God in your behalf, that her powerful intercession may be to you a guarantee of your ever enjoying the Divine blessing and protection.

April 26.

COMFORT ARISING FROM HOPE IN GOD—I.

I. Seeing that the virtue of hope enables Christians to expect with confidence that God will sufficiently and even bountifully give them all things necessary for salvation, if only they on their part do what He demands of them, should it not be to them a source of supreme comfort and satisfaction? We can readily perceive that, where hope is wanting, darkness distresses the mind and misery the heart; but where other conditions obtain, where trust in God is firm and constant, then both mind and heart experience a sense of security and peace. The holy writer says: 'Ye that fear the Lord, hope in Him, and mercy shall come to you for your delight' (Ecclus. ii. 9); and St. Paul says: 'We are saved by hope' (Rom. viii. 24). Christians who cast all their care upon God dutifully abide by the decrees of His providence in all things, for they are confident that He knows what is best, and that He will do always what is for the best. This relieves their mind of much worry and misgiving, and makes them buoyant and content.

Pray, devout Christian, for an increase of the virtue of hope. The prophet says: 'Hope in thy God always' (Osee xii. 6). Hope for every grace and help in working out your salvation; hope for the pardon of all your sins upon the conditions ordained by God; hope for temporal blessings according to God's decrees; and hope for final perseverance and for the heavenly reward, trusting always in God's infinite mercy and in our Lord's infinite merits.

II. Christians are comforted by hope in their daily necessities and in their frequent temptations. They know how little they can do of themselves in providing for their daily needs, and they look confidently to God's loving

providence. This providence has not failed God's faithful servants in the past, and they do not fear that it will fail themselves in the present. They are confident that God will know when and how to come to their succour in the vicissitudes of life. Religion demands this constant trust in God, for only from Him do all blessings come, and He is worshipped by our dutiful spirit of dependence upon Him. On our part, we must pray and we must adopt the means necessary to provide for our temporal wants. We should certainly despond if left only to our own efforts and devices. In temptations God, too, will be with those who trust in Him. He says to His devout servant what He said to St. Paul : ' My grace is sufficient for thee ' (2 Cor. xii. 9) ; and this Apostle gives us the consoling assurance : ' God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able ' (1 Cor. x. 13). Christians are confident that God will listen to their prayer in the hour of temptation, and this is their comfort under this form of trial.

Devout Christian, be hopeful in the time of distress and anxiety, desiring indeed that help and relief may come to you, but leaving yourself to God's good pleasure as to the manner in which they may reach you ; and be valiant when assaulted by temptation. God loves trustful souls and all who dutifully cast themselves upon Him for help and protection. Say with David : ' My eyes are ever towards the Lord ' (Ps. xxiv. 15).

III. Hope sustains and comforts the Christian wayfarer in his earthly journeyings ; it supports him in his trials, it gives unction to his prayer, and it gives assurance as to the future. We read of Susannah, when unjustly condemned, that ' she weeping looked up to Heaven, for her heart had confidence in the Lord ' (Dan. xiii. 35) ; and we know how God raised up a prophet to reverse the false judgment and save her. And what an instructive example of trust in God under the vicissitudes of life is furnished in the history of holy Job ! Christians, too, confide in God in the midst of their trials, and their hope in Him buoys them up. When they pray, too, hope is

the foundation of their supplications, and the stimulus to their perseverance in prayer, as it is also a necessary condition of their being heard (St. James i. 6). Finally, when Christians look beyond the grave into the unseen future, hope comforts them and bids them be of good heart, if only they seek earnestly to love and serve God. The holy writer says: 'No one hath hoped in Him and been confounded.' O precious and necessary virtue of Christian hope, be ever our comfort!

Devout Christian, humbly pray that God will vouchsafe to strengthen your trust in Him and give it constancy. Drive far from your soul the dismal spirit of despair. Let the thought of God's love and mercy ever comfort you. Pray to Mary, the Star of the Sea, the true friend of God's friends, to help you with her unceasing patronage, that thereby your hopes may be strengthened, and your fears allayed. If Mary ever protects and supports you, you will be safe.

April 27.

COMFORT ARISING FROM HOPE IN GOD—II.

I. When we consider the object of our hope, and its real character, we see good reason for comfort. Hope leads us to trust in God, and to expect from Him everlasting life and happiness, and all the means necessary for attaining to these blessings. This hope, infused into our souls as a Divine supernatural gift, is in its character lively, firm, and constant. It is built upon the Divine promises, upon faith in the goodness, love, and mercy of God, upon the infinite merits of our Divine Saviour and Redeemer, and upon the pledge given us by God's adoption of us as His children. Thus our hope will not be a vain one, if we do not oppose God's loving designs in our regard, and if, corresponding with His grace, and aided by it, we fulfil the conditions of attaining to the blessedness we hope for. These conditions are primarily and essentially the keeping of God's commandments. In vain, then, is the hope of men who live without religion, who blaspheme, who commit adultery, who steal, who wilfully despise God's Church, and who do other evil things forbidden by the Law and by Christ. It is admitted that we are weak and prone to evil; but God's grace, which we must seek, and which will be granted to us, is all-powerful, and by it we shall be supported and aided to fulfil all the necessary conditions of salvation. Our hope in God must be accompanied by a salutary mistrust of ourselves. The one will preserve us from despair, and the other will save us from presumption.

Devout Christian, reflect with comfort on the blessings God has prepared for you, and on His assurances of His aiding you to attain to them. It is written: 'They that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good. . . . The

Lord will redeem the souls of His servants: and none of them that trust in Him shall offend' (Ps. xxxiii. 11, 23). Seek God's aid in all your needs, and at all times.

II. Our great work in life should be to fulfil the conditions which will bring us to the realization of our hopes of eternal life. We must not turn aside to do nothing to the purpose, or to do what will destroy our hopes. Yet there are many men who do nothing for their salvation. The hope of such is vain, even as the hope of men who offend grievously against the Divine law. Without repentance and a change of life such men will never reach the kingdom of Heaven. It is written: 'Add not sin upon sin, and say not, The mercy of the Lord is great; He will have mercy on the multitude of my sins. For mercy and wrath quickly come from Him, and His wrath looketh upon sinners' (Ecclus. v. 6, 7). All would be well if only sinners turned and threw themselves on the Divine mercy (Ezech. xxxiii. 12). There are many who will not do this. If they are lost, the blame will rest only with themselves. While we labour to fulfil the conditions of salvation, hope comforts us, and inspires us with courage and constancy. It was the support of the glorious martyrs under their sufferings, and it led them to their crown. It is the support of all true servants of God, and it encourages them under the burdens of life. In temptations, in weariness, in labours, and in sickness, they look up from the Cross to the bright Heaven above. They think of the words: 'Behold, your reward is great in Heaven' (St. Luke vi. 23).

Devout Christian, recognize the necessity of ever avoiding the ways of evil, and of ever striving to please God. From God will the reward come, and He promises it only upon His own terms. Lament the folly of men who spend their lives without labouring for the heavenly reward. Ever direct your steps towards it, and then will your hope be a reasonable and well-grounded one, and it will comfort you on the way.

III. The prophet says: 'Blessed be the man that trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord shall be his confidence' (Jer. xvii. 7). Hope is to God's servants as the anchor of

salvation, securing them from being carried away by the current of worldliness and sin. Hope, too, is like a ray of Divine light shining through the mist of our present troubles, and showing us the golden shore of the heavenly paradise. There awaiting us, and inviting us, and interceding for us, are the Blessed in their white robes with crowns on their heads. Hope cheers us with the thought that we shall pass from the Church Militant to the Church Triumphant, even though for a time we may have to abide with the Church Suffering. Hope shows us in the eternal kingdom Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our Faith (Heb. xii. 2), in the glory of His Divine Sonship, and in the resplendent robe of His immortality, in Whom we trust, and through Whose power our deadly enemy, Satan, has been cast down and overcome. Our Lord, speaking to us as our Good Shepherd, our Friend and Brother, bids us to have confidence, to carry our Cross patiently, and to fight the good fight. We hear Him encouraging us to follow Him, and saying : ' I am the way, and the truth, and the life ' (St. John xiv. 6). Trusting in our Lord's merits, love, and promises, let us ' glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God ' (Rom. v. 2), and let this hope be our priceless comfort.

Devout Christian, your confidence is not a vain presumption ; for it is built upon a firm, Divine foundation. You do not trust in your own strength, but in the aid and support of Divine grace. St. Paul says : ' Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, instant in prayer' (Rom. xii. 12). To a holy joy resulting from a firm hope join patience and prayer. What comfort this will give you ! Ask Mary, your heavenly Mother, to obtain for you an increase of the virtue of hope.

April 28.

DIFFIDENCE IN OURSELVES.

I. Lessons drawn from the Word of God and from the study of spiritual things lead Christians to a thorough conviction of man's moral weakness and fickleness. They acknowledge how true is that which our Lord said: 'Without Me you can do nothing' (St. John xv. 5). How wrong, then, is it in men to trust to themselves! How many sad falls have resulted from such vain confidence! Christians who have learned to mistrust themselves and to place all their confidence in God may be said to have already made marked progress in the spiritual life, and to be imbued with a wisdom that will yield the happiest results. Such Christians will recognize the duty of fidelity to prayer; they will seek the immense benefits to be derived from the frequent reception of the Holy Sacraments, and they will carefully avoid what might inflame their passions, or in any way prove to them an occasion of sin. The happy result of such conduct will be so to establish them in the ways of a virtuous and devout life that they will not easily forsake them. They will, by God's grace, become firm in virtue and strong against their spiritual enemies. Such as these work out their salvation with a holy fear and trembling, and they escape the two pitfalls of despair and presumption.

Learn, devout Christian, the wisdom of a practical confidence in God accompanied by diffidence in yourself. Of yourself you cannot avoid evil or do good. Your own experience in the past teaches you to mistrust yourself. Reflect, then, on the words of Solomon: 'He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but he that walketh wisely, he shall be saved' (Prov. xxviii. 26.)

II. When men trust in themselves, they often, through

a want of correct enlightenment, employ the wrong means to attain the ends they propose to themselves, or, misguided by a vain confidence, they neglect to employ the necessary means. Such men, too, because they overrate their moral strength, expose themselves to dangers which the less presumptuous would sedulously shun. They therefore meet with disappointments, and experience falls, which tend to embitter life and to cause despondency. Moral failure disheartens, weakens principle, and lessens energy. Men who trust in themselves have many vulnerable points and have no sure footing : it is not surprising that they become the victims of their own passions, and of the temptations of the wicked and of Satan. How different would the case be if, recognizing their dependence upon God, they constantly sought succour from Him ! St. Paul says : ' We are not sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is from God ' (2 Cor. iii. 5). In the spiritual warfare, and in the work of our salvation, our own efforts only will not suffice ; we need God's all-sufficient aid.

Devout Christian, be not deceived by any vain confidence in yourself. Such confidence may lead you to regrettable falls. God invites you to trust in Him. Think of Him often, and pray often for His help. Say with David : ' O God, come to my assistance ; O Lord, make haste to help me ' (Ps. lxix. 2).

III. When Christians are mistrustful of themselves, and dutifully place their confidence in God, it wins for them the Divine regard and blessing. We do not trust in God in vain. The holy writer says : ' No one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded ' (Ecclus. ii. 11). He may indeed try us by afflictions, and He may permit us to suffer temptation, but He will not leave us unaided if we put our trust in Him. It will be with us as with St. Paul when our Lord said to him : ' My grace is sufficient for thee : for power is made perfect in infirmity ' (2 Cor. xii. 9). Christians who mistrust themselves because of their weakness and fickleness find comfort in God's assurances of help to those who dutifully cast their care upon Him ; they

feel that they are not alone in the warfare of life ; and their faith in God's power, goodness, patience, and mercy, inspires them with abundant and constant confidence. They may say with the prophet : 'The Lord is good to them that hope in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him' (Lam. iii. 25).

Devout Christian, God has never abandoned you when you have called upon Him with humility and with confidence. Let your mistrust of yourself lead you to turn ever to Him : He will be your Helper and Protector. Only under the shelter of His wings and aided by His power will you be safe. Pray to Mary to obtain for you the consolation and security of God's loving care and providence, and of His constant aid and protection, that you may persevere in grace and serve Him without fear all your days (St. Luke i. 74).

April 29.

FAULTS OPPOSED TO CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

I. CHRISTIANS who do not seek God's help and blessing in all their undertakings manifest thereby a degree of reliance upon themselves which is opposed to that whole-hearted and complete confidence which they should place in God. Those Christians display this necessary confidence who practise daily prayer, by which they worship God in all His attributes and offer Him due homage, and who study in their actions to comply with the requirements of the Divine law. There are, however, others who manifest a want of this necessary confidence; in their case it would seem that, without any thought of God or prayer to Him, they depend for success upon such considerations as their own personal position, talents, or industry. We read in the Prophet Jeremias: 'Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord' (Jer. xvii. 5). Humble and devout servants of God, acknowledging that they themselves and all things have been created dependent upon God, recognize how little they can rely upon their own knowledge, judgment, foresight, power, and tact; therefore do they ever invoke God's help and blessing upon their daily lives and efforts. At the same time, without, however, any want of trust in God or of dependence upon Him, they take care to turn to good account their time, talents, energies, and opportunities, hoping indeed for the success they desire, but leaving the issue in God's hands.

Recognize, devout Christian, your entire dependence upon God, and have confidence in His wise disposal of all your affairs, and in His constant help and blessing. Take care not to do anything contrary to His law, and ever pray for His guidance and support.

II. Christians commit another fault opposed to confidence in God when they attribute to themselves, and not to God's blessing, the success of their undertakings. It is as if they held that they do not need God's help, and as if they trusted not in Him, but in themselves. This is contrary to that dependence on God and confidence in His help which is a necessary homage of every rational creature. In the attainment of success we are only as instruments in the hands of God; and we know that the work done is attributed, not to the instrument, but to the hand that uses and guides the instrument. Our Lord asks: 'Which of you, by taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit?' (St. Matt. vi. 27); and He tells us that man must look to God for all things. At another time He said to His disciples: 'Without Me you can do nothing' (St. John xv. 5). How offensive, then, it must be to God when Christians pretend that it is by their own effort they have accomplished their works and achieved success in their undertakings; they do not manifest confidence in Him, but only in themselves, and they therefore fail to bless Him for the bounties of His providence. The holy writer, having declared the wonders of all God's works, concludes, saying: 'What shall we be able to do to glorify Him? for the Almighty Himself is above all His works' (Ecclus. xliii. 30).

Devout Christian, give praise to God for all the works of His providence, and for the blessings that wait upon you, for all things are from His hands. If you are endowed with talent and energy, they are His gifts; give, therefore, to Him praise and thanksgiving for whatever through His gift and blessing you are enabled to accomplish.

III. Some Christians lose confidence; they begin well, but presently fall away. If they begin with God's help and blessing, will He presently desert them? No; but they desert Him. Yet St. Paul says that 'our sufficiency is from God' (2 Cor. iii. 5). Such Christians imitate St. Peter, who at our Lord's word stepped upon the waters, but soon lost confidence and began to sink. Many Christians walk confidently when everything runs smoothly

with them, but fail in time of trial and difficulty. Many follow our Lord to Thabor, but fall back when they are invited to take up their cross. How many men are found wanting when they are invited to abandon brilliant worldly prospects in order to embrace the true faith or to enter the religious state! How many men there are who are willing to confess their sins, but who stop short in the way of true conversion when they are required to forsake and avoid the occasions of their sins! Then do their boldness and determination come to an end. Where, we ask, is their confidence in God? They are not left to themselves, but God, Who calls them to repentance, will help them in every step of the way and in all the works and sacrifices it entails. They seem to mistrust the succour of God's all-powerful grace.

Devout Christian, hold it for certain that when God demands anything of you, He will give you both to will it and to accomplish it. He will be with you both at the beginning and end of every work that is pleasing to Him. Pray to Mary to obtain for you a lively and constant confidence in God's help, that you may not be deterred by difficulties, or overcome by misgivings and fear.

April 30.

ST. CATHARINE OF SIENA

I. Among the Saints for whom our Lord has shown special predilection is St. Catharine of Siena, who lived in the fourteenth century. This holy virgin, upon attaining the use of reason, manifested unmistakable signs of sanctity, and early in life was favoured with visions and extraordinary heavenly tokens of our Lord's love. She soon became familiar with prayer; and to prayer and recollection she added unusual corporal penances. She was inspired to aim at an imitation of the lives and practices of the ancient fathers of the desert. Her parents so far seconded her in this as to permit her to become almost a recluse. To her solitary chamber she would sometimes bring other young persons to instruct them in the ways of piety. When she had reached the marriageable age, her father arranged an alliance for her; but the holy virgin, having already consecrated herself to Christ, resisted her father's will in this matter. Her father, therefore, wishing to alter her ideas, brought her from her solitude and employed her in the menial work of the household. Catharine, however, made for her Heavenly Spouse a sanctuary in her own heart, and, in the midst of distracting duties, practised solitude of mind and heart by interior recollection and incessant prayer. Finally her father relented, and permitted her to resume her former mode of life.

Devout Christian, strive ever to correspond with the movements of grace, and yield your will only to God, and if to others, for His sake only. Pray for a true and constant love of piety.

II. When St. Catharine had attained her eighteenth year she was admitted into the Third Order of St. Dominic. To her extraordinary abstemiousness and corporal penances

she added the practice of silence and continual prayer. The enemy of mankind was permitted to annoy her with revolting pictures presented to her imagination ; but, true to her Heavenly Spouse, she resisted the tempter, and gained many triumphs over him. After one of these severe conflicts, our Lord visited her, and consoled her, telling her how He had supported her under the trial. Her devotion to our Lord in the Holy Eucharist was of a marvellous character. She at times subsisted for several weeks only by her Holy Communions, and when her confessor commanded her to take ordinary food she obeyed, but she was unable to retain what was given her, and the vomiting which ensued brought her to the point of death. God used St. Catharine as a means of working many conversions. Her influence in this way was extraordinary. It appeared that her very glance, as well as her words, had the desired effect. On one occasion, when her efforts to move a very turbulent and obstinate man seemed unavailing, she paused to pray, and at once the man was changed in his dispositions and made his peace with God. Her charity for her neighbour, even from her childhood, was manifested by great self-abnegation ; and on more than one occasion she attended with great assiduity persons suffering from loathsome disorders. In one of these cases she overcame her natural repugnance by putting her mouth to the affected part, and even drinking the water with which the affected part had been washed. In this particular case her charity was rewarded by being grievously calumniated by the object of her gentle and assiduous care ; but this did not cause the Saint to discontinue her charitable attentions.

Devout Christian, admire the piety, constancy, and charity of St. Catharine. Recommend yourself to her prayers and ask her to obtain for you a more vehement love of God, and a more practical love of your neighbour.

III. For years St. Catharine endured, with admirable patience, severe pains of body. Her devotion to our Lord's Sacred Passion caused her an attraction for suffering. It is recorded in her life that upon one occasion our Lord

presented to her two crowns, one of gold and the other of thorns, bidding her to take for herself whichever she preferred. The Saint at once took the crown of thorns, and pressed it upon her head, declaring that she desired only to resemble our Lord in His Sacred Passion. A further favour, but one of a more enduring kind, was bestowed upon her. After receiving the Holy Communion one day, our Lord gave her the marks of His five Wounds ; but upon the earnest entreaty of St. Catharine He granted that they should not appear so as to excite notice. She, however, experienced all the pain of the Wounds. The Saint was employed on more than one occasion to effect reconciliation and to bring peace in the case of rebellions and wars. In such embassies she greatly aided the Sovereign Pontiff, Gregory XI. ; and, moreover, she proved a counsellor to him in various serious matters. She also abetted this Pontiff's successor when an anti-Pope was elected. St. Catharine was in Rome, called there by Pope Urban VI., when the accumulation of her ailments brought about her death. She was at the time only thirty-three years of age. God endowed St. Catharine with more than ordinary talent, and gifted her with superior knowledge in spiritual matters, and in the discernment of spirits. Her life was one of trial, labour, charity, and piety.

Devout Christian, admire this great Saint's devotedness to the interests of the Church, and her forgetfulness of self when charity for her neighbour or for society claimed her devotedness. Admire, also, her fidelity to her Divine Spouse, for in the midst of all her distracting duties her only thought was for His glory, and she communed in her heart with Him. From her earliest life St. Catharine showed special devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Imitate her in this respect, and ask Mary, your own special Patroness, to obtain for you grace to seek ever to become more pleasing to her Divine Son, and to profit by the lessons given by His Saints.

May 1.

DEVOTION TO MARY.

I. If we would keep in touch with the devotion of the children of the Church in every age, we must reverence, love, and invocate the ever-blessed Mother of our Lord. She must have her place of honour in our minds and hearts, in our prayers and devout practices, and in our churches and homes. As in the ages that are past so to-day are Mary's praises proclaimed in every Catholic church, and devotion to Mary is preached from every Catholic pulpit. It should rejoice us that this is so. In the explanation of Catholic doctrine Jesus is not presented to us without Mary; and we are ever reminded of the great fact that God has given Jesus to us through Mary, and not without Mary. When St. John the Baptist was sanctified before his birth, it happened as soon as Mary's salutation sounded in the ears of the mother (St. Luke i. 41, 44). When the holy shepherds found the Divine Infant in the stable Mary was there too; and when Jesus died on the Cross Mary stood by. Have we nothing to learn from the Gospel lessons? Are we not to learn anything from our Lord's spending thirty years of His life in Mary's society? Are we going to deny Mary our reverence and our love?

Devout Christian, regret any indifference which you may at any time have felt in your relations with the ever-blessed Mother of our Lord, and seek now to show devotion towards her every day. Desire to imitate those Saints who were specially devout to Mary.

II. Devotion to Mary rests upon the place God has allotted to her in His plans and dispensations, upon the rich and bounteous gifts He has bestowed upon her, upon the teaching of the Church, and upon the constant example of the faithful from apostolic times. The world

was to receive its Divine Saviour through Mary, and God created Mary to be the Mother of His own only-begotten Son. No more perfect creation could be conceived. Mary was to have the most intimate and exalted relations with the Divine Trinity, and relations of a most special kind with men redeemed by her Son. Not only was she preserved by an extraordinary dispensation from every stain of sin, but she was gifted with supereminent sanctity, and with grace in superabundant measure to raise her in greatness, dignity, majesty, and glory above every other creature, human or angelic. Holy Church has ever taught her children to honour Mary, and to show devotion to her; then the faithful have in every age loved Mary, and sought with confidence the help of her intercession.

Devout Christian, let all this inspire you with sentiments of respect, of admiration, and of love for Mary. Have a zeal for her honour. Bless and thank God for all the favours He has bestowed upon Mary, and for those you yourself have received through Mary's powerful intercession.

III. The children of the Church follow two banners. Under these they fight and triumph; under these they march on their way to the Promised Land for which they are fighting. The two banners are those of Jesus and Mary. Those glorious names are inscribed on them as pledges of heavenly protection and of victory. Unbelievers look on. They see through the vista of ages the vast array of Christ's true followers, as the centuries go by, covering gradually the whole earth, and always marching onward under these two heavenly banners, compact, undismayed, and triumphant. Under these banners, and under similar conditions, are gathered to-day the hundreds of millions of the children of the Church. Is it possible that some persons take scandal because Catholics place the banner of Mary at their head along with that of Jesus? Ask the faithful of the ages of faith, ask the faithful of every age, if it should be so. Ask the Saints of God in Heaven who owe so much to Mary if it should be so. Ask the Angels of God, ask St. Michael, St. Gabriel, and all the Blessed

Spirits who witness and admire Mary's present greatness and glory, if it should be so. Go further, and ask Jesus Himself, Who is honoured through the honour given to His incomparable Mother, if it should be so. Will He not answer : ' I ever honoured My Mother, I honour her now, and I will ever honour her ; and it is My will that she should be ever honoured on earth and in Heaven ' ?

Devout Christian, associate yourself with all devout clients of Mary in devotion to her, and beg of Mary to deign ever to cherish and protect you as her child.

May 2.

MARY'S GREATNESS.

I. MARY is exalted above all other creatures by reason of her dignity, her favour with God, her sanctity, her glory, and her power. It is only becoming that men should recognize, admire, and honour what God has done for her. God has raised her to the dignity of His Mother; for it was Mary who brought forth and gave to the world God the Son when He came to redeem us. This most exalted dignity establishes Mary's incomparable excellence and greatness, and claims for her the highest honour which may be rendered to any creature, even honour (hyperdulia) surpassing in degree that which is due to the most exalted of the heavenly Spirits. Gabriel said to her: 'Thou hast found grace with God.' God honoured Mary in destining her to be the Mother of His Son, and Mary acknowledged the Divine favour when she exclaimed: 'He that is mighty hath done great things to me.' The Divine maternity itself established relations of the most sacred character between Mary and God, and it was accompanied by Divine gifts and favours altogether incomparable. We dare not venture wilfully to deny to Mary any of the honour which her greatness gives her just claim to, for to do this might be indirectly to offend God, Who has deigned to bestow that greatness upon her, and Who has given her title to honour from every creature in Heaven and on earth.

Devout Christian, admire God's work in Mary. Acknowledge with reverence and piety her dignity and greatness. Mary is more pleasing in God's eyes than all other creatures. With what respect and honour, therefore, should you not regard her?

II. Mary's incomparable sanctity and glory render her

truly great, and as these are necessarily in keeping with her dignity and with the favour with which God regards her, they also necessarily raise her in greatness above every other creature. God preserved Mary from original sin and from every stain of personal sin, so that she was ever spotless, and He, moreover, bestowed upon her that surpassing measure of grace which made her more holy than even the purest of the heavenly host. Gabriel proclaimed her sanctity when he saluted her, saying: 'Hail, full of grace! the Lord is with thee.' Holy Church has ever given testimony to Mary's spotless holiness, which she has held up for men's admiration and imitation in every age. St. Gabriel and St. Elizabeth both declared of Mary: 'Blessed art thou among women'; and Mary herself foretold that this praise should be rendered to her even to the end of the world, for she said: 'Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed!' Mary's present glory is in keeping with her dignity and with her grace. We delight to consider how exalted and glorious is her majesty in the heavenly realms. We honour her as the beautiful Queen seated at the right hand of her Divine Son, adorned with the heavenly gifts and splendour which become the Mother of God. Considering, then, what are Mary's dignity, sanctity, and glory, we find ourselves unable to conceive the extent of her greatness.

Devout Christian, ever proclaim with loving devotedness the praises of Mary, and join loyally with the Saints of every age in proclaiming her greatness.

III. Mary's incomparable greatness is seen also in the power of her intercession. Saints and sinners, men and women in the world and in the cloister, kings and pontiffs, have in every age sought the help of Mary's prayers. They have put themselves with confidence under her protection and sought her holy patronage. All this testifies to faith in Mary's power. Her prayers have obtained countless graces for every class of persons, and this accounts for the confidence Catholics have in her, as witnessed by the crowds who visit her shrines, and by the number of those who wear her scapulars, who recite the holy rosary, and

who manifest their devotion in other ways. Who shall say how many favours have been obtained, how many sinners have been converted, and how many evils have been averted through Mary's prayers? Her greatness is seen, not only by the exceeding number of her clients, but also by the happy fruits of her intercession. From how many lips goes up the prayer: 'We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God'! How many children of Mary in every land love to recite her litany and the Memorare of St. Bernard! How many, too, when in sorrow or other trial, prostrate themselves before Mary's altar or statue, there to plead for the help and consolation they look for!

Devout Christian, reflect, with pious affection, on Mary's greatness; think of what she may do for you if you honour her, and if you seek her intercession. Fail not to have recourse to Mary in all your difficulties. Beseech her, now, to count you among her devoted children, and to obtain for you that love of her which will please her Divine Son and herself.

May 3.

MARY'S HOLINESS.

I. The Angel Gabriel declared to Mary that she was full of grace. We rejoice to offer our homage to her as to the holiest of creatures. God enriched her with every gift that could make her pleasing to him, and worthy to be the Mother of His Son. She was, by an eternal decree, preserved from all sin and from every tendency to sin. To her does Holy Church refer the words of the Canticles: 'Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee' (Cant. iv. 7); and, inspiring her children with sentiments of delight and thanksgiving, the Church celebrates, with a special solemnity, the glorious privilege of Mary's immaculate conception. At no time did any shadow of sin sully Mary's soul, for God bestowed upon her the altogether special grace and gift of sinlessness. Everything about Mary breathed of the most spotless holiness. There was never any faultiness in her mind, heart, will, or affections, nor in her words or conduct. She was most perfectly pure and exempt from everything that opposes the operations of grace, and no culpable source of sin had any place in her. She was therefore free from every kind of disorderly inclination to evil; her whole nature was subject to the spirit, and her spirit was ever subject, with a most perfect submission and docility, to God.

Devout Christian, ever claim this spotless creature as your heavenly Mother and Protectress. Lament your own unworthiness and faultiness, and ever strive to avoid every kind of sin. Pray to God to turn your mind and heart from all evil.

II. Not only was Mary preserved from all sin, but the Divine bounty in her regard went further, even to communicating to her in an exceptional degree the various

graces which produce holiness. The Church declares that by reason of her exemption from original sin she was redeemed in a more especial way than others (Bull, 'Ineffabilis Deus'); in view, also, of the merits of her Divine Son, applied more fully to her than to others, the ever-blessed Trinity favoured her with a super-abundant infusion of all the supernatural habits which constitute sanctity. She had an eminent degree of sanctifying grace; she possessed, in perfection, the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, and in fullest measure all the gifts and fruits of the Holy Ghost; and to all these heavenly endowments were added also those rare and special gifts which were conferred on the holy Apostles. She was therefore full of grace in this sense, that in all interior and supernatural habits, and in every precious grace conducive to perfection and sanctity, she surpassed all creatures human or angelic. This was only as it should be, if we consider her sublime calling and destiny. All generations have done honour to her holiness, which in God's immutable designs was to be her everlasting adornment. During her earthly career, by her faithful correspondence with grace, she ever added to her holiness.

Devout Christian, ever admire the surpassing excellence in grace of your heavenly Mother. Shelter yourself under her powerful protection, and seek, by piety and virtue, to be a more worthy child of so holy a Mother. Pray for the grace of a true zeal for your sanctification, that you may become more pleasing to God.

III. Mary's life ever bore the stamp of holiness; she excelled in the perfect character of her actions. She was ever actuated by the most fervent charity, which burned strongly and constantly in her most pure heart, sanctifying all her thoughts, words, and deeds. To this interior disposition corresponded a perfect exterior performance of all she did, and the employment of every opportunity of pleasing God whether by word or act. She turned all circumstances and events to good account, and she faithfully followed the Divine inspirations which were lavishly

bestowed upon her. She embraced with a dutiful spirit the dispensations of Divine Providence, as well those which caused her pain and sorrow, as those which gave her joy and consolation, and she desired only to accomplish the Divine Will. She lived ever in union with God, and she was never affected by the vanities of the world. She ever fulfilled most honourably and most faithfully all the duties of her exalted calling, and she bore with consummate patience and resignation, the trials which befel her. All this gave evidence of the plenitude of the grace bestowed upon Mary, and the sublimity of her holiness.

Devout Christian, study the perfection of Mary's life—her interior dispositions and her exterior conduct. Thank God for the graces lavished on your heavenly Mother, and finally beg through Mary's intercession a detestation of every kind of sin, and a love of piety and virtue. Beware of the vanities of the world, of the snares of Satan, and of the delusions of evil inclinations.

May 4.

CONFIDENCE IN MARY.

I. Holy Church teaches us to seek Mary's intercession with great confidence. Our confidence is grounded upon her favour with God, upon her relations with her Divine Son, and upon her compassion for us. We learn from the Holy Scriptures that the friends of God had great power with Him when they pleaded for others, as in the case of Moses, Job, and Onias; and it is written: 'The continual prayer of a just man availeth much' (St. James v. 16). What, then, may we not expect from the prayers of the Mother of God? for by reason of this highest of all dignities, and by reason of her eminence in grace and in glory, Mary is, as the second Council of Nicaea (A.D. 787) declared, more sublime than any other creature visible or invisible. God will graciously hearken to her prayers, because she is the most favoured of all creatures; and our humble petitions presented by her will be heard for her sake. When Queen Esther appealed to Assuerus, that great King said to her: 'What is thy petition, Esther, that it may be granted thee?' And the Queen said: 'If I have found favour in thy sight, O King, and if it please thee, give me my life for which I ask, and my people for which I request.' Her petition was granted. We believe that when Mary presents her petitions to God in our behalf, she will be heard because of the favour with which God regards her.

Devout Christian, be strong in your confidence in Mary. If she presents your petitions to God, and if they are worthy to be entertained, they will be granted for her sake. In your spiritual and temporal needs, and in all your trials, call upon Mary that you may be helped and comforted.

II. We have confidence in Mary because of her rela-

tions with her Divine Son, through Whose merits all good comes to us. St. Bernard reminds us that we have our Lord as our mediator with the Father; but if, because we are sinners and because we remember that our Lord, though man, yet remains ever God, we experience any bashfulness or difficulty in approaching even Him, then we must have recourse to Mary, for she is our advocate with Him. The Son will give a gracious hearing to His Mother, and the Father will give a gracious hearing to His Son. Let our confidence in Mary's intercession be strengthened by calling to mind that our Lord was subject to her gentle sway during thirty years of His life on earth, and that He loves Mary no less now than then. At her request He wrought His first miracle, when He changed water into wine at Cana; and she has not lost anything in favour in His eyes since that time. How gratifying it is to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus to lavish favours on us when Mary pleads for them! We may fancy we hear Him say to her, as Solomon said to Bethsabee: 'My Mother, ask: for I must not turn away thy face' (3 Kings ii. 20). The vision of Mary's love, devotedness, sufferings, and deserts, are ever before Jesus; and all these plead together with her mother's voice when she prays for her children, who, through her Divine maternity, are also His brethren.

Devout Christian, be confident that Mary's prayers to her Son will be heard. Have recourse to her for her powerful mediation when you seek for mercy in the Sacrament of Penance, and for heavenly sustenance in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, and at all times of need.

III. Another source of confidence in Mary is her compassion for us. After the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, there is no heart so devoted to men as Mary's; her heart beats in unison with her Son's in all that concerns man's welfare. We even represent to ourselves Mary still pleading for sinners when, by reason of their persistent faultiness, Jesus has turned away from them. We style her the 'Refuge of Sinners.' In title of her spiritual and adopted children we ever look up to Mary, and we believe that she has for us more than a mother's love. She has received the

title of 'Help of Christians' because of the Divine aid and protection vouchsafed to the Church in times of special danger and difficulty, and attributed to her intercession. We also style her 'Comfort of the afflicted,' because in every age the afflicted have had recourse to her, and have experienced relief and consolation. Mary's office is like that of her Son, Who came to remedy the ills of mankind; so devout Catholics, confiding in her maternal compassion, have recourse constantly to her under their afflictions and in their sorrows. They do not appeal to her in vain.

Devout Christian, ever invoke the intercession of your most compassionate heavenly Mother with confidence. When depressed by sorrow or affliction, or when distressed by any faultiness, you are the object specially worthy of her pity and help. Remember ever her favour with God, her power with her Divine Son, and her compassion for men, and, like her fervent clients, you will turn to her with filial confidence and recommend yourself to her prayers.

May 5.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

I. THE heavenly truths and lessons which have reached us, and which are intended in the providence of God for our enlightenment, comfort, and guidance, have come to us by two channels: by the written Word of God found in the Holy Scriptures, and by the unwritten word (or tradition) found in the Catholic Church. By the providence of God, the Jewish Church of the Old Law, and the Catholic Church of the New Law, have carefully and faithfully guarded and preserved the inspired writings. It is the sacred office of the Catholic Church to point out to us these inspired writings, and to interpret them for us. They are divided into the books of the Old and New Testaments, called the Bible. The Holy Scriptures are to be received by us in their entirety with the greatest reverence; but many passages found in them are very obscure, and, being written in special circumstances and for particular times, they are not intended in a direct way for our immediate guidance. They yet reveal to us the beauty and majesty of truth, the goodness and condescension of God's affection for His creatures, and the perfection of His Will. They comfort us by showing how God 'raiseth up the soul, and enlighteneth the eyes, and giveth health, and life, and blessing' (Ecclus. xxxiv. 20).

Devout Christian, reverence with special affection the sacred Scriptures which the Church declares to be the true version, and read them with due respect for her guidance and interpretation. The reading will instruct you, and lead you in the ways of heavenly wisdom, and you will derive from it encouragement and comfort.

II. Countless Christians in every age, by meditation on the lessons of Holy Scripture, or by listening devoutly

to their explanation by preachers of the word, have been led in the holy path of religion and virtue. Christ our Lord intended that this should be so. How great a treasure in the Church are, then, these sacred writings! How much human wisdom pales before the bright light of God's revealed truth! God has bestowed upon many men great intelligence, a keen discernment, and much reasoning power, but He has not made man independent of His revelation. All must believe His word and submit their reason to Him, because He is Truth itself. All must be 'taught of God' (St. John vi. 45). Who shall instruct us concerning the incomprehensible Divinity, concerning heavenly mysteries, and concerning the conditions of salvation if God be silent? But God has spoken: and patriarchs and prophets and other holy writers have, under God's inspiration, recorded the Divine message in the pages of Holy Writ. Then God became man, and speaking with a human voice He deigned to instruct His disciples, and apostles and evangelists have, under Divine inspiration, recorded many of His heavenly teachings. Concerning the Holy Scriptures St. Paul says: 'What things soever were written, were written for our learning: that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope' (Rom. xv. 4).

Devout Christian, ever, in reading the Old or New Testament, seek lessons for your guidance and be filled with sentiments of admiration and gratitude. Praised for ever be God, Who has deigned to reveal to us His truths and the wonders of His ways!

III. St. Paul says: 'All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work' (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17). Out of the rich treasury of the Divine Scriptures Holy Church brings forth the lessons which it is her office to teach us. Out of the same treasury, under her guidance, we may derive lessons suitable to us under the various circumstances of our lives, so that we may know what our conduct should be in prosperity and in adversity, in joy and in sorrow, and in

temptation. Christians would therefore do well to find time to read the Holy Scriptures, especially the holy Gospels found in the New Testament. Profiting by the sacred lessons contained in them, they would be like to the scribe of whom our Lord said : ' Every scribe instructed in the kingdom of Heaven, is like to a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old ' (St. Matt. xiii. 52). No more profitable reading can be found than that contained in the narration of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount (St. Matt. v., vi., vii.), and in other discourses given in the Gospels (St. John xiv.-xvii.). How often, alas ! do men, neglecting this holy reading, feed their minds with what is unprofitable ! Shall judgment be hereafter passed upon them ' because the Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light ' (St. John iii. 19) ?

Devout Christian, be resolved to read with pious consideration the lessons of the Gospel. Thank God for having deigned to give His heavenly message, and pray that you may receive it dutifully, and carry out its injunctions faithfully. Ask Mary, the ' Seat of Wisdom,' to obtain for you grace to relish her Divine Son's teachings, and to profit by them.

May 6.

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD—I.

I. Our Lord said: 'Blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it' (St. Luke xi. 28). The world has been converted by the preaching of the word; but many have fallen away from the truth, and many have retained the word, but have not kept it. That the word of God may be profitable to us, we must listen to it with proper dispositions, receive the Divine message which it conveys to us, and do the things demanded of us. Then shall our hearts be comforted, 'being instructed in charity, and unto all riches of fulness of understanding, unto the knowledge of the mystery of God the Father and of Christ Jesus: In Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Col. ii. 2, 3). Our Lord's Parable of the Sower of the Seed (St. Luke viii.) teaches us with what dispositions we should listen to God's word. Men who are engrossed with the vanities of the world, and whose hearts are distracted and hardened by inordinate love of the riches and pleasures of the world, will not be the good ground that is prepared for yielding a plentiful harvest. We must give a willing ear to God's word, and study the lessons it teaches, praying for grace to understand them and to put them in practice. A right hearing of the word will ennoble and supernaturalize our minds and hearts, and draw them to God. Then shall we be moved by holy affections of faith and admiration, of worship and reverence, of thanksgiving and love, and of hope and joy. These affections will produce their effect in the character of our life.

Devout Christian, resolve to value the word of God, and pray that you may listen to it with proper dispositions. Be not like those who listen without heeding, or

those who do not relish the lessons conveyed by the word because their hearts are turned from God.

II. We should listen with reverence and attention to the word of God, because it conveys to us a heavenly message. We may, indeed, derive lessons from the contemplation of creation. St. Paul says: 'The invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made' (Rom. i. 20). Creation declares to us the existence of a Creator, and manifests God's perfections, such as His Power and Wisdom, which are for ever to be admired and worshipped. God's dealings with men under the Old Law, especially all the wonders He wrought in dealing with the Israelites, are another revelation to us of God. But our greatest lesson is that which is afforded by the Divine Incarnation and by our Lord's own teaching. St. Paul wrote: 'The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us' (Titus ii. 11). God has delivered to us His message by His own Son, our loving Saviour; and Jesus has revealed to us the tenderness, the longings, and the lessons of His most Sacred Heart. The pastors of the Church are the appointed preachers of the word. Outside the Church the ministers preach their own word—that is, their own private opinion concerning religion and Christ's teaching—but the Bishops and Priests of the Church preach in the name of the Church, and they deliver to us the teaching of the Church, submitting to the infallible judgment of the Church all their teaching and all their words. Catholics, therefore, do not say, I believe this or that preacher, but I believe the Holy Catholic Church.

Devout Christian, receive with thankfulness and docility the lessons imparted by the word of God, receiving them as God's message to you. Reverence them as such.

III. We should be eager to listen to the word of God, because it is the bread of the soul. Our Lord said: 'Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word of God' (St. Luke iv. 4). There must be nourishment to preserve the spiritual life of the soul. We may say that as a tree lives not only by the moisture of the soil in which it is

rooted, but also by the warmth of the sun, and by the dews which fall upon it, so our soul needs something more than natural sciences to satisfy it : there must also be the light of supernatural faith and the aid of heavenly grace. Heavenly teaching is the supernatural bread of the soul. By a loving dispensation the bread of the word is distributed by the ministers of the Church in every land. 'Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth : and their words unto the ends of the world' (Ps. xviii. 5) ; so that the children of the Church do not clamour for bread in vain (Lam. iv. 4), for everywhere there is someone to break it to them. Sometimes men are met with who seem to think that preaching is useful for others, but that they themselves can without loss dispense with it. This is a very wrong notion. The word of God is intended for every class of persons. Men following the higher professions, men raised far above the path of labour and of poverty—all need the heavenly bread of the word. Without it our soul feels a want which nothing else can supply.

Devout Christian, regret the neglect of the word, which leaves so many men without the light, guidance, encouragement, and comfort imparted by it. Study ever to draw useful lessons from sermons and spiritual reading. Ask Mary, the Seat of Wisdom, to obtain for you a right understanding of heavenly truths, and a zeal for your own spiritual good.

May 7.

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD—II.

I. God gives proof of the reality of His love, and of His desire of our welfare, both in this world and in the next, by His word. We should look upon His word as a friendly voice. Is he not truly our friend who tries to make us better than we are, and who teaches us what is most useful to us? God does this. Raised above us as God is by the infinite character of His Divine perfections and of His supreme glory, He yet condescends to become our friend and counsellor, and to speak to us by His word. The word of God instructs us in the requirements of a Christian life, and tells us of the life and virtues of our Lord, of His precepts and counsels, and of the heavenly reward. It warns us against sin, and it helps us to discover our faults, and instigates us to seek amendment. The efficacy of the word is sacramental—it is powerful to win hearts to better ways, and to convert the obdurate. The word of God, moreover, suggests to us motives for consolation in our sorrows, and for patience under our trials. Even as the love and kindness of our friend is disclosed in his conversation, so is God's love of us and interest in our salvation made known to us by the secret word of His inspirations, and by the spoken word of His Gospel and of its appointed ministers. When God ceases to speak to us, we have reason to fear that we have proved unfaithful to Him, and that He has therefore abandoned us; but while He continues to speak to our soul, there is every reason for hope.

Devout Christian, cherish the lessons of God's word, and strive ever to correspond with the movements of grace. While the voice falls on the ear, grace knocks at the door

of the heart. God, as your Divine Friend, would instruct, or guide, or warn, or console you. Be docile to His voice.

II. We should listen to the word of God, because of its efficacy to do us good. Its power and penetrating force are described by St. Paul where he says: 'The word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword: and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart' (Heb. iv. 12). It helps us to know ourselves, and to discern our motives, our affections, and our imperfections; and it does more than this, for the word of God does more than convey knowledge. It draws our hearts to God, and it inspires us with holy desires. The word of God has a corrective power: it is like the leaven which was put into three measures of meal and leavened the whole mass (St. Matt. xiii. 33). Received into a well-disposed heart, it effects a happy change therein, and infuses into it a spirit of Divine charity, which makes it zealous for what is good and pleasing to God. Why will men try to escape hearing the word of God? Is it any wonder if they remain unconverted, worldly, indifferent about salvation, and, in many ways, faulty? How will the proud become humble, the sensual devout, the angry meek, and the negligent fervent, if they never study the lessons of God's word? By the efficacy of the word, they would be admonished and instructed in all wisdom, so as to be presented perfect in Christ Jesus (Col. i. 28).

Devout Christian, desire for yourself the blessings of enlightenment and conversion which proceed from the right reception of God's word, and pray for grace to experience its Divine efficacy.

III. We should listen attentively to the word of God, in whatever way it may reach us; and then it would be 'a lamp to our feet, a light to our paths' (Ps. cxviii. 105). It is a voice that moves us to higher aspirations, and that prepares us for eternity. Should not this be the effect of our listening to it, seeing that it tells us of God, representing Him to us as our loving and merciful Father;

that it tells us of the Son of God, putting Him before us with all His Divine attractions as our Brother and Saviour, and assuring us of the inestimable riches of His redemption; and that it tells us, moreover, of the heavenly intercession of Mary and of all the Angels and Saints, of the truths we must believe, of the worship we owe, of the virtues we must practise, of the duty to be done, and of the bright future before us in a heavenly inheritance? Enlightened by all this teaching, we become imbued with faith, and with an attraction to the ways and practices of a devout life. What would become of the world if the word of God was never heard, and if we were left without the light of this saving doctrine? Through God's merciful dispensation this will never be. Our Lord came as the Orient on high to visit us, and 'to enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death: to direct our feet into the way of peace' (St. Luke i. 79). This enlightenment and guidance will be offered to men by the ministry of the word to the end of all time.

Devout Christian, thank God that you may at all times enjoy the benefit of this holy ministry. Try ever to put in practice the lessons received through it. Not everything that Nature suggests is to be followed, and our good impulses need guidance. He is a wise man who seeks to know what will be pleasing to God, and what will contribute to the furtherance of his highest interests. The word of God will instruct him on these points. Ask Mary, who was ever attentive to Divine inspirations and to heavenly teaching, to obtain for you the grace to imitate her.

May 8.

FALSE PROPHETS.

I. We have to contend with enemies who desire our everlasting ruin. They sometimes pose as prophets, and they seek to lead us by the lessons and principles they strive to instil into us ; but they are false prophets. Their guidance is ruinous, and their promises are false. These prophets promise us various kinds of satisfactions, if only we yield to their suggestions ; but, as the outcome of their deception, we come only to spiritual misery and destruction. While seducing us, they conceal the poison of the proffered bait, the unwisdom of their counsels, the pitfalls which beset the path they invite us to follow, and the delusion which will attend their promises. Under such deception as this, if we listen to these false prophets, we proceed to spiritual disaster. Let us beware of all teachers, counsellors, and false friends, who would lead us to break God's most holy law, to depart from the path of virtue and piety, or to neglect religion or duty. If such should be their leading, they show that they are evil counsellors ; for if the tree be good, it will produce good fruit, and if bad, it will produce bad fruit. Our Lord has said : 'By their fruits you shall know them' (St. Matt. vii. 16). We may consider as false prophets our own evil passions, the seductions of the world, and the enemies of the Church ; for all these present dangers of one kind or another to our spiritual welfare and to our salvation ; but all pretend to lead us to some gain or advantage to ourselves.

Devout Christian, remember how St. Peter cautions you against deceitful guides who count for a pleasure the delights of a day, who, leaving the right way, have gone astray, and who allure others into paths of evil, 'whereas they themselves are the slaves of corruption' (2 St. Pet. ii. 19).

Love rather the way of the Saints, and study the holy lessons of their lives and teaching, that you may not be seduced.

II. Many persons are seduced by evil passions, which, as 'false prophets,' allure them with promises of gratification and pleasure, but which are verily 'ravening wolves' that destroy peace, and rob the soul of heavenly gifts. Ah! if men only unmasked these passions, and laid bare their wickedness and their evil consequences, they would not so often become their dupes. What desirable benefits, what worthy fruits, do men expect from envy, avarice, impurity, and intemperance? It is written of men who loved better things, that they were 'Rich men in virtue, studying beautifulness: living at peace in their houses. All these have gained glory in their generations and were praised in their days' (Ecclus. xliv. 6, 7). But what will be said of men who are victims of evil passions? Do they not pass from the honourable service of God and the ways of virtue to the slavery of these passions, and to paths of secret or open vice? Should they not curse the false prophets that lead them astray? Other false prophets are the seductions of the world, and particularly evil associates. 'By their fruits you shall know them.' They promise a glorious liberty, and it turns out to be an unworthy licence. They promise the world's smile, and gratifying pleasures and gains, but these are found disappointing, and they end in bitterness. To gain these delusive satisfactions the world's dupes have to abandon the ways of piety, the innocent joys known to the just, and the sober path of self-restraint; and there result a deterioration of taste and feeling, and an insatiable desire of novelty and dissipation. Does the world make them wiser and better? This cannot with truth be said to be so.

Devout Christian, open your eyes to the deceitful snares of your spiritual enemies, and you will discover these enemies to be false prophets. Seek strength against their seduction by studying our Lord's teaching and the demands of God's holy and honourable service.

III. As the knowledge and following of the true religion

must ever be reckoned one of the greatest of God's gifts and graces, it should not surprise us that enemies arise to rob us of what we hold so dear. Among these enemies are some who, when they attack us, think that they do a service to God (St. John xvi. 2). A blind prejudice, a wrong idea of Catholic teaching, and an education in a false religion account for their animosity, and for their zeal to lead us away from our faith. We must be on our guard against this class of false prophets, and therefore we should not read their religious books and tracts, attend their religious lectures, or listen to their attacks upon our holy faith. There are also false prophets among men who profess to be dutiful children of the Church. These are men who put forth unapproved systems of thought, who find fault with the pastors of the Church, and who even dare to criticize the definitions of her Councils and the decrees of her Pontiffs. With scant humility on their own part they pretend to superior education, and to an extensive acquaintance with science, and with much plausibility they make false statements about the backwardness of the Church in these spheres. Such men as these are ravening wolves in sheep's clothing. Let us be docile to the Church, and be guided by this divinely appointed guide in all that concerns our faith, our religious practices, and our moral conduct. She will lead us in the path of truth, religion, and virtue, and will point out to us the way to eternal life, and the means to be employed to reach it.

Devout Christian, follow St. John's counsel: 'Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world' (1 St. John iv. 1). Beware of all new and strange doctrines. While living in charity with all men, beware of the errors concerning faith which are, alas! so widespread: 'Having faith and a good conscience, which some rejecting have made shipwreck concerning the faith' (1 Tim. i. 19). Beseech Mary, your heavenly Mother and Protectress, to obtain for you grace to avoid all false prophets and to detect their snares, that, with a good conscience, you may always walk in the holy way of truth, piety, and virtue.

May 9.

THE DANGER OF DECEPTION.

I. In directing our steps heavenwards, we must take care not to be led aside so as to take a wrong path. We have to avoid all error or wilful doubt as to the faith, and all vice, and all serious neglect of religion and of duty. These are the paths which lead souls astray. We have to avoid a twofold deception—namely, the deception of false guides and bad companions, and the deception of ourselves by hypocrisy and by false notions and ways. Others may seek to influence us by false teachings and bad advice, insinuating, or leading us to believe or do what is wrong. There are in life two ways—namely, the broad way followed by the many, and the strait way followed by the few. The first leads to destruction, and the second to life (St. Matt. vii. 13, 14). Only our enemies would designedly strive to make us quit the strait way. When the Romans had been drawn from the broad way by the teaching of the Gospel, St. Paul wrote to them, saying : 'What fruit had you then in those things of which you are now ashamed ? For the end of them is death' (Rom. vi. 21). All grievous sin leads to spiritual death in this world, and to everlasting death in the world to come. Everyone on the broad way is in the state of mortal sin, and therefore on the way to destruction. We have to be on our guard against all who would lead us into grievous sin. Usually this is not done openly, but by various deceptions. Sometimes evil advisers not only give bad advice, but they also lead bad lives ; then are they more easily known.

Devout Christian, as you wish to be for ever associated with God's elect in Heaven, seek now the company of the just. Beware of the influence of men who are irreligious or attached to the vanities of the world. Beware especially

of men with evil principles, and of such as tempt others into evil ways.

II. Some men deceive themselves, and they establish for themselves a false standard of living. To such as these Christ says : ' Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven.' It is not enough for salvation to profess to follow our Lord—professions will not save us. There must not be insincerity or hypocrisy. We may indeed deceive our neighbour, and pass for true servants of God ; but what will this avail us if we secretly break God's law, and if our religion is only a pretence ? God is not honoured by specious piety, pretended religiousness, or hypocrisy. Our service of God must be sincere, devoted, and constant. No standard of living is safe which disregards the sincere profession of the true faith, accompanied by the observance of the essential duties which it imposes, or which fails in practical charity towards the neighbour. Some men establish for themselves a lower standard of living, which, when examined, is found to be framed, not on devotedness to Christ, but on self-love, and to be wanting in the noble and generous spirit of Christian self-denial. Religion must not be superficial, but deep-seated in the soul. A standard of living which should not commend itself to us is that of men who seldom pray, who limit their reception of the Holy Sacraments to what is strictly commanded, who practise no devotions, and who lead worldly lives, indulging their appetite, engrossed in business, and loving the sports and pleasures of the world. Such men are strangers to true devotion, and they expose themselves to be contaminated by the spirit and ways of the world. What edification do they give ? Will the example of their lives draw men to the Church ? Do such men always avoid the pitfalls of evil and the commission of mortal sin ?

Devout Christian, beware of self-deception as to what God's service demands. God is ever generous in His bounty and love towards us ; how ungenerous towards Him are men who set themselves to do only the very least that is necessary to secure their salvation ! Owing to

human weakness, and to the power of temptation, they may fail to do this.

III. Our Lord teaches us by His life and words to do the will of our Heavenly Father, and this doing of God's will should be the rule of our conduct. No standard of living which does not embrace this rule should commend itself to us. Are we desirous of doing the will of false guides or unsafe companions, or our own fitful and often perverse will, rather than the all-wise and all-perfect will of God? If we follow any other will we expose ourselves to the most cruel deception. Our Lord has said: 'He that doth the will of My Father Who is in Heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven' (St. Matt. vii. 21). This will requires us to embrace all God's appointments, and to obey His commands. Self-love would mark out for us a life of indulgence and ease, but such a life is not in keeping with the self-denial imposed by the Gospel, and is not conducive to our true welfare. Do self-willed men reflect upon the demands which the Divine appointments may make upon them? Do they recognize that they are servants and not masters? Our Lord has said: 'Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel shall save it' (St. Mark viii. 35). Doing God's will requires that we should submit our minds to our Lord's teaching (St. Mark xvi. 16), that we should obey all God's commandments (St. Matt. xix. 17), and that we should hear the Church (St. Luke x. 16; St. Matt. xviii. 17). When we dutifully submit ourselves as thus demanded God Himself is our Guide and Master.

Devout Christian, see how you may be secure from all error and deception. Ever pray to know God's will, and ever beg for grace to embrace it with due conformity. The fruit promised to this conformity is now 'wisdom, and knowledge, and joy' (Eccles. ii. 26), and hereafter the kingdom of Heaven. Ask Mary, ever devoted to the Divine will, to obtain for you grace to desire only what God wills in your regard.

May 10.

TRUE RELIGIOUSNESS.

I. Wrong notions concerning religiousness may be corrected by a study of our Lord's condemnation of the Pharisees. Religiousness, to be true and profitable, must be such as God demands of us. It must be religiousness as well of the heart as of exterior conduct, and not one of these without the other. The Pharisees seemed to be persuaded that all that God required in His service in the Old Law was the observance of various religious functions. Our Lord condemned this wrong idea and the exterior religiousness which resulted from it, because it robbed religion of its very essence—namely, the interior worship of God and the holy dispositions which should accompany it. He declared of the Pharisees, that while particular in fulfilling exterior observances their hearts were 'full of rapine and uncleanness' (St. Matt. xxiii. 25). We should therefore recognize that our exterior practices of piety, which indeed rightly belong to God's worship, must not stand alone. They derive their true signification and value from the interior dispositions by which they are prompted, and by which, too, they are accompanied. Exterior acts of religion not accompanied by the interior virtue of the performer will not be acceptable to God. When men are leading a bad life their show of piety will not be accepted by God as a sacrifice in the odour of sweetness. Such men are like the Pharisees whom our Lord compared to whited sepulchres, outwardly beautiful, but within full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness (St. Matt. xxiii. 27).

Devout Christian, let your acts of piety proceed from a heart moved by faith and love. Let not the interior of your soul belie the religiousness of your exterior conduct.

Let your worship be always the expression of your interior dispositions.

II. True religiousness supposes and requires compliance with all the essential demands of religion, and a readiness to do what we believe would be pleasing to God. Opposed to it is that love of our own convenience, or that waywardness which would lead us to attend to certain observances, and to comply with certain commandments or with certain duties, while neglecting more serious obligations. Our Lord found fault with the Pharisees because they were exact in regard of certain tithes, but they neglected 'the weightier things of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith' (St. Matt. xxiii. 23). It would be profitable to us to observe both the counsels and the precepts of the Gospel; but it would be wrong to neglect the precepts which are binding upon us and to strive to follow the counsels which are only recommended. It would be wrong to set great value on receiving the ashes on Ash Wednesday, and the palm on Palm Sunday, but to disregard the law of hearing Mass on all Sundays, and of receiving the Holy Eucharist at Easter. It would be wrong to confine our obedience to some of the commandments and not to observe all of them. We must, if we would be true servants of God, comply with all the conditions of salvation. Some persons seem to be deluded into holding false notions of religiousness, for they are anxious to do what is only a matter of devotion, while they neglect doing what is a matter of obligation.

Devout Christian, remember our Lord's words: 'These things you ought to have done, and not to leave those undone' (St. Matt. xxiii. 23). Let your attention be directed first to the graver obligations of God's law, and only afterwards to what is of counsel and of devotion.

III. True religiousness is directed by an enlightened conscience and by holy motives. Pride, envy, and an unworthy ambition are opposed to it. Our Lord said: 'Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father Who is in Heaven' (St. Matt. vi. 1). Our

Lord described the Pharisees as hypocrites because they performed their good works with a view to standing well in the eyes of men. They prayed, fasted, and gave alms, not with the object rightly belonging to such works, but with the vain object of meriting men's esteem and applause. Our Lord condemned their conduct by reason of the unworthy motives which prompted it. Let us learn from this to be single in our purpose, and to seek, by our religiousness, only to please God. Since we cannot do any good work meritorious of the heavenly reward without God's grace, the glory of all such works belongs by right to God. It would be wrong, then, to seek glory for ourselves from men by our prayers, our alms, or kindnesses, our devotedness to duty, our mortifications, and our Confessions and Communions. Let us not vitiate what would otherwise give glory to God, and merit for ourselves grace and heavenly reward by such faults as self-love, vanity, or seeking men's praise and esteem. Our Lord said to the Pharisees : ' So you also outwardly indeed appear to men just ; but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity ' (St. Matt. xxiii. 28).

Devout Christian, ever aim at sincerity in all your works of piety and of charity. Only thus will they give glory to your Heavenly Father. Let your religiousness be inward, aiming at doing all that God demands of you, and sincere. Pray to Mary, the ' Mirror of Justice,' to obtain for you the grace of true religiousness in your whole conduct.

May 11.

GOOD WORKS THE TEST OF RELIGIOUSNESS.

I. Our Lord said, when the Jews wished to stone Him: 'If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not' (St. John x. 37). By the works of a life true to God are we to give evidence that we are the children of our Heavenly Father. Our Lord, when questioned by the disciples of St. John the Baptist as to His mission, gave no direct word of affirmation that He was the Messias; but He directed their attention to His works. Our Lord's works manifested His Divine power, and His goodness, mercy, compassion, and love. He said: 'The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the Gospel preached to them' (St. Matt. xi. 5). How admirable and beneficent and worthy of our Lord these works were! What a manifestation, too, they were of the tenderness and compassion of the Sacred Heart! By our works we are required to prove the sincerity of our religiousness. Our charity, our piety, and our submission to God and to all lawful authority are not to be measured by our professions, but by our conduct. In vain do we pretend to virtue, if in our conduct we are proud, uncharitable, loose, dishonest, intemperate, and neglectful of the claims of religion. Such conduct will not stamp us as being the children of our Heavenly Father, and followers of Jesus Christ. The character of our life must bear out our professions. Alas! that many men who wish to be reckoned true Christians bring disgrace on the name by the scandal of their lives; while others, by their indifference and neglect, fail to give any evidence of their Christian character. They do not bring forth fruits of virtue and piety to distinguish them from unbelievers in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Devout Christian, admire the works of your Divine Lord and Master. Strive, by works of piety and charity, to give evidence of your devotedness to Him and to His Gospel. The perfection of His Law should be seen in the

superior works and more perfect lives of His followers, so as to fulfil what is written : ' Waters are broken out in the desert, and streams in the wilderness ' (Isa. xxxv. 6).

II. When our Lord came to save the world He gave evidence of His merciful mission by preaching to the people, instructing them in the way of salvation, and by giving His life for all mankind. Who, then, could doubt the character and object of His mission ? The poor, indeed, listened to Him, and on every occasion became eager listeners to His preaching ; while, for the most part, the Pharisees and others in exalted positions carped at His teaching. Despite all obstacles placed in His way, our Lord persisted in teaching the people, and this He did even in the Temple, where the Pharisees mostly gathered. All this manifested the earnestness with which He fulfilled His mission. We must persevere in dutifulness to God, and in the working out of our salvation, as the years go by, in spite of any difficulties in doing so, and in spite of the opposition we may encounter. Our good works and our piety must, all through our life, give evidence of our Christian calling. We must not lose courage and fall away, for we have Him with us Who has called us, and Who is the author of our salvation. He says to us : ' Fear not, for I am with thee : turn not aside, for I am thy God : I have strengthened thee, and have helped thee ' (Isa. xli. 10). We are happy to have our Lord's teaching and example to guide us, and His Divine assurances to encourage us. His help will not desert us. Alas ! that many men fall away ! How often the young, when beginning life, give up their pious practices ! Do they begin to wish to be considered only followers of the world ? Where are now the tokens of their religiousness ? Are they ashamed to be regarded as children of the Church, followers of Jesus Christ, and wayfarers pursuing their journey to the Kingdom of God ? Let them remember our Lord's words : ' He that shall deny Me before men I will also deny him before My Father Who is in Heaven ' (St. Matt. x. 33).

Devout Christian, be earnest in all that concerns your duty to God and your salvation. Pray for grace not to be deterred or disheartened by any opposition you may

meet with. Let your persistence and constancy give proof of the genuine character of your religiousness.

III. Human respect, spiritual indifference, and want of moral courage account, in great measure, and in many instances, for the falling away from true religiousness. Our Lord said : ' Blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in Me.' Are men to content themselves with professions ? Is not their life to be moulded upon our Lord's holy teaching, and not be dependent upon everyone's caprice or upon what the world will say ? Is the servant to be greater than the Master ? Religion must be seen in the light of our Lord's teaching and practised according to His lessons and commands. The principles of truth and justice are inflexible, yet there are men who wish the Church to be less uncompromising in the standard of faith and morals which she upholds. Has the day gone by in which self-denial, submission to authority, poverty, modest reserve, and humiliations were held in esteem ? Is the observance of the laws of the Church to be considered now a matter of choice and not of obligation ? Is not the authoritative voice of the Church, when she condemns errors in doctrine or false notions of morality, to be any longer respected ? If all this be the case, is there to be no difference between the good works demanded of members of the Church and those which unbelievers hold themselves bound to perform ? Is Christianity to dwindle down to naturalism ? Good works, those inspired by the Gospel teaching and by Christian principles, are the true test of religiousness. Are our works up to the required standard ? How important is this question ! For our Lord has said : ' The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His Angels : and then will He render to every man according to his works ' (St. Matt. xvi. 27).

Devout Christian, ever testify to your love of our Lord by piety and dutifulness in your conduct. Be zealous that all men may confess His Name before the world by the religiousness of their lives. Blessed shall those be who strive to promote the love of religion and the doing of good ! Ask Mary, the heavenly Mother of all Christ's followers, to obtain for you the grace to be a doer of the word, and not a hearer only.

May 12.

WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION.

I. Our Lord, in the Parable of the Vineyard, teaches us that we must labour for our salvation if we would receive the heavenly reward. This reward is not for men who remain idle in the market-place of the world. Even though we go into the vineyard only at the eleventh hour, and labour during that hour, Heaven will be ours. The parable, however, is not meant either to discourage those who during all their life labour to please God and to work out their salvation, or to lead men to defer until late in life their true conversion. We know not the day nor the hour (St. Matt. xxv. 13); so, for all we know, we may even now be at the eleventh hour of our lifetime. We are all called to the vineyard of God's service, by which we are to understand that we must labour for our salvation; for salvation is to those who are God's servants. God's calls reach us in various ways, as by the interior movements of His grace and by the exterior ministry of His Church. Both these agents invite us to labour for our sanctification. Whatever God requires has for object not alone His own glory, but also our everlasting gain and happiness; for there will yet be, when our labour is over, an everlasting recompense. If we fail to labour, the loss will be entirely our own. For may we not say that salvation has been made easy? We are placed in the bosom of the Church, and we enjoy our share of the wonderful blessings which God pours out so plentifully upon her. By means of the Holy Mass and of the Sacraments we partake of the rich and abundant graces merited for us by our Lord's Passion and Death; and by our own prayers, and by the powerful intercession of the Saints, we obtain constant heavenly

aid. Thus supported and helped, we may readily observe God's law, and fulfil all other conditions of salvation.

Devout Christian, embrace willingly the work of the vineyard—namely, the service of God ; and recognize its importance. God should be served, not negligently, but fervently and constantly.

II. Salvation may be attained not only by men who have never lost their baptismal innocence, but also by sinners, if, moved by grace, they turn sincerely to God, and amend their way of life. Conversions occur at different times. Some sinners soon turn back to the right path ; while, in the case of others, conversion does not take place for years. Our Lord, by the Parable of the Vineyard, assures us that even men who are converted only late in life will, if they persevere, be saved. Grace may be corresponded with at the third, at the ninth, and even at the eleventh hour ; and at these times we may enter into the service of God, and receive His rewards. At such hours it may be said to us : ' Why stand you here all the day idle ? Go ye also into My vineyard ' (St. Matt. xx.). In the invitation to enter the vineyard, it is God who makes the first advance. He finds us idle, and He asks us to enter into His service. He might leave us in our sin ; but His fatherly love seeks us out, and presses us to amend. To bring us to labour for the heavenly reward He employs various ways. He seeks to touch our hearts, now by kindnesses, and then by punishments ; at one time by repeated warnings, and at another by sudden calamities. At whatever time and by whatever means the invitation comes, we must respond to it. To disregard God's voice, to neglect His proffered grace, would be to expose ourselves to be cast off, and to be left in our sin, with all the sad consequences. Happy are those who correspond with grace, and who enter, though late, into God's service. If only they persevere, they will be saved. Our Lord's parable teaches us that this will be so. How comforting is this assurance for men who are conscious that they have misspent some part of their life, but who have repented of it !

Devout Christian, admire the goodness of God's fatherly

charity. If He dealt with us only according to our sins and ingratitude, how sad would be our lot!

III. We shall never regret the labour spent in saving our soul. How sad, on the other hand, will men be who have neglected this work of the first importance, when they shall have no place among those who are called to receive the heavenly reward! The eventide is ever drawing nearer, when the Divine Master of the vineyard will say to His servants: 'Call the labourers, and pay them their hire.' O elect of God, you have had your labours and trials, you have carried the Cross, you have disdained unlawful gains and pleasures, you have been faithful to the duties of religion, and you have kept My commandments and the precepts of My Church; now is the everlasting reward to be made over to you; now do I invite you into the heavenly kingdom, where you shall rest from your labours, and share the eternal joys with all the Blessed. The degree of reward will be according to everyone's merit, and everyone will for ever praise the Divine Justice and God's exceeding goodness. The heavenly reward is not for men who neglect the service of God and the work of their salvation. Would that, while there is yet time, sinners would enter into themselves, and calculate now the everlasting loss of Heaven, which will cause them useless regret in the prison of God's wrath hereafter! Let all who are labouring in the vineyard bear the toil patiently, and continue with courage and constancy until the eventide of life. Let the thought of the everlasting reward encourage them, and support them under the difficulties they may encounter.

Devout Christian, be thankful for the grace God has bestowed upon you, while so many men, alas! are idle in the market-place. Sanctify your labours by prayer. Do not become a slothful servant. Fervour in God's service will enhance your reward. Ask Mary, who was ever faithful to grace, and who has received the highest reward in Heaven, to pray for you, that you may put no obstacle to your salvation, but may merit by your fervour the reward promised to every good and faithful servant.

May 13.

CONDITIONS OF SALVATION.

I. Some men would seem to expect salvation without any effort on their part, while others pretend to lay down for themselves comfortable conditions, as though God would be satisfied with their views in the matter. It would be deceiving ourselves if we failed to recognize the real terms upon which God will receive us into His everlasting kingdom. To Him only and absolutely does it belong to fix those terms. Alas! many disregard those terms; for our Lord said: 'Many are called, but few are chosen' (St. Matt. xxii. 14); 'Strive to enter by the narrow gate: for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter and shall not be able,' (St. Luke xiii. 24). God, as our sovereign Ruler, has given His commandments, and it is absolutely necessary that we should observe them. Their observance is a condition of salvation; for our Lord said: 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments' (St. Matt. xix. 17). Any grave breach of the Divine law unrepented of will cause our damnation. In will, as well as in exterior conduct, we must comply with the Law. Wilfully to disregard the ruling of the commandments would be to set ourselves in opposition to God, and to incur His punishments. In vain do we expect to go to Heaven if this be our conduct in relation to God's commands. It is written: 'Keep My commandments, and thou shalt live' (Prov. vii. 2).

Devout Christian, love the holy way of God's commandments, that you may enjoy assurance of salvation. David said: 'I looked for Thy salvation, O Lord: and I loved Thy commandments!' (Ps. cxviii. 166). Be circumspect, and avoid the snares of your spiritual enemies, who would lead you to disregard God's commands and the things that are pleasing to Him.

II. As the grace of God is absolutely necessary for salvation, we must either live ever faithful to grace, or we must regain it by repentance if we have lost it. Happy are those who have preserved their innocence! And happy, too, are those who have done penance for their sins, and regained God's grace! If we would enjoy the everlasting vision of God, we must aim at innocence of life—that is, we must carefully avoid mortal sin. St. Paul says: 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness: without which no man shall see God' (Heb. xii. 14). And St. John says: 'Every one that hath this hope in him sanctifieth himself' (1 St. John iii. 3). What a picture, alas! the world presents of scandals, irreligion, and licence! Does it not cause serious misgiving about the salvation of many souls? If only men would repent! A way to salvation lies open even to the worst of sinners—it is the way of penance. Repentance is absolutely necessary as a condition of salvation when men have fallen into mortal sin. Our Lord says: 'Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish' (St. Luke xiii. 3). Men should be for ever grateful to God for opening to them the arms of His mercy when they have outraged Him by mortal sin. True repentance requires not only sorrow for sin committed, but also renewal in God's service, and determination to keep the commandments; for God says: 'If the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all My commandments, and do judgment and justice, living he shall live and shall not die' (Ezech. xviii. 21). There must be a humble confession of sin, with true interior sorrow and sincere purpose of amendment. God will then accept the sinner's repentance, and restore him to grace.

Devout Christian, strive ever to live in innocence of life. Often renew your good resolutions. Frequently approach the holy sacrament of Penance. Then may you find comfort when you reflect upon the difficulty of securing your salvation.

III. Hope of salvation will be weakened where there is no real interest in this most important of all concerns. Our Lord said: 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the

whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul ?' (St. Mark viii. 36). There should be more zeal and effort in working for our salvation than in labouring for temporal gains. 'Seek first the kingdom of God.' Some men are over-anxious about worldly concerns ; others have no thought about saving their soul. How, then, can they give themselves any assurance for the future, seeing that with fear and trembling they should work out their salvation (Phil. ii. 12) ? 'Labour the more,' says St. Peter, 'that by good works you may make sure your calling and election' (2 St. Pet. i. 10). Religious indifference is a serious obstacle to salvation. Another condition has yet to be fulfilled if we would be saved. We must persevere in grace. If we are not in the state of grace when we die, we shall certainly be lost for all eternity. Our Lord said more than once : 'He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved' (St. Matt. x. 22 ; xxiv. 13). We may experience many and various trials of our constancy, but, God helping us, we will prove faithful. Our Lord says to every one of us : 'Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life' (Apoc. ii. 10). Alas ! how many begin well, and afterwards fall away ! The crown is not for such as these.

Devout Christian, avoid all tepidity, carelessness, and indifference in the service of God, and in labouring for your salvation. Ask Mary, your heavenly Protectress, to obtain for you a constant zeal for your salvation, and courage on the way. In your difficulties, temptations, and dangers never fail to have recourse to her powerful intercession, and all will be well.

May 14.

PERSONAL HOLINESS.

I. Men are not saved collectively, but individually. Every one of us has to work out his own salvation. What is this but to say that every one of us must be in the state of grace, or must be holy, in order to be saved? Holiness of life is what the Christian vocation demands of all of us. Sometimes we are reproached because of the open crimes committed by Christians, or of the bad lives led by them; but men who give this scandal and bring this reproach upon the Church are condemned first of all by the Church itself. Such men do what is forbidden by the laws of God and of His Church. The whole effort of the Church is to lead men to holiness of life. Holiness was demanded in the Church of the Old Law, and it is equally and even more fully demanded in the Church of the New Law. The precept of the Old Law was: 'I am the Lord your God: be holy because I am holy' (Lev. xi. 44). In the New Law this precept is repeated and enforced. St. Pet. says: 'Be you in all manner of conversation holy. Because it is written: You shall be holy, for I am holy' (1 St. Pet. i. 15, 16). Our Lord bids us labour to be perfect, for He says: 'Be you therefore perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect' (St. Matt. v. 48). The precept is binding on every individual Christian, and grace is afforded to enable all to observe it.

Devout Christian, the measure of grace which you need to fulfil your obligation of leading a holy life is bountifully bestowed on you. Do you correspond with it?

II. The call to holiness given to all does not demand in all the same degree of sanctity, but yet every one of us is under the obligation of living in God's grace, and of striving to be holy. We must of necessity avoid mortal

sin. It is not enough merely to avoid evil, we must also do good works. St. Peter therefore says: 'Wherefore, brethren, labour the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election' (2 St. Pet. i. 10). Precious and necessary as faith is, it will not suffice to make us just; therefore does St. James ask: 'Do you see that by works a man is justified; and not by faith only?' (St. James ii. 24). Our character as children of God, members of Christ's mystical body, and heirs of the heavenly kingdom, demands that we should lead a holy life. The sanctity of the Saints, the virtuous lives of good Christians, will not avail us so as to stand in our stead—there must be our own personal holiness, and without this we shall not be saved. How foolishly do those speak who, neglecting religion themselves, refer to the good lives of their parents, as though they themselves would be thereby saved; or again, of those who say that in their youth they practised enough in the matter of religion to suffice for their lifetime! The obligation of holiness, or freedom from mortal sin (of commission or of omission), binds personally, and throughout life. Wise and well-disposed servants of God are happy to find themselves placed under this salutary obligation.

Devout Christian, pray to God in the words of David: 'Let my heart be undefiled in Thy justifications, that I may not be confounded' (Ps. cxviii. 80). Never cease making effort to lead a life pleasing to God.

III. Christians who strive after holiness procure for themselves many blessings. How happy it should make them to know that they are not, so far as they are able to say, in the state of mortal sin, and that they are in the way of salvation! Beside this comforting knowledge, they experience many other blessings. They have an enlightened faith and a well-directed conscience. They feel an attraction towards what is good, and Divine charity prompts them in many ways. They relish prayer and spiritual duties; and in their difficulties, temptations, and sorrows they readily turn to God, Whose help they experience as a reward of their trust. Because they keep the command-

ments and are recognized as true servants of God, they stand well in the opinion of their fellow-men. The value of their good example is acknowledged, even by many who do not follow it. Personal holiness merits personal reward. We have considered some of the blessings experienced by the just in this life, but there is also the everlasting reward of the Elect in the kingdom of Heaven. Would that men who neglect the duties of religion, and who break God's law in various ways, might come to reflect upon the wickedness and folly of their conduct, and turn to wiser and better ways!

Devout Christian, strive to imitate the conduct of exemplary Catholics. By prayer, strive for constancy in piety and grace not to neglect the duty of personal sanctification. Ask Mary, the bright star of holiness, to obtain for you the graces you need to enable you to be ever faithful to God.

May 15.

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT SALVATION—I.

I. The important subject of salvation should often occupy our mind. In the bustle of life it should not be lost sight of. We ever have a soul to save, and there are conditions to fulfil whereupon we may save it. The neglect of the work of salvation, which may be said to be man's folly, and which prevails in the world, may have its influence even upon men who do not lose sight of the 'one thing necessary.' Our Lord said: 'What exchange shall a man give for his soul?' (St. Matt. xvi. 26). If we lose our soul, we have preferred something else, and looked upon it as a gain. But our Lord tells us that if we gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of our soul, the gain will be useless. Satan offered Him 'all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them,' but our Lord drove him away, saying: 'Begone, Satan' (St. Matt. iv. 8, 10). Thus, too, must all Christians reject every bargain or exchange which will involve the loss of their soul. The soul belongs intimately to a man; it is a part, and the noblest part, of his being, and it is immortal. What he is offered in exchange is something exterior to himself, something of passing value, or some unworthy satisfaction. There have been men who wilfully lost their soul for one base gratification. The malice and unworthiness of these preferences consist in rejecting God Himself for such miserable gains.

Devout Christian, be ever wise in consulting your own eternal welfare. What will it profit you to enjoy ill-gotten gain and unworthy pleasures for a few years, if thereby you incur everlasting punishment hereafter?

II. When men lose their soul, they lose what Christ purchased for Himself and for His heavenly kingdom at the price of His own most precious Blood. Conceive, then, if

you can, how much our Lord values our souls, and how exceedingly He loves them. Do they not bear the image of their Divine Creator ? (Gen. i. 27). And have they not been endowed with precious gifts suitable to our dignity as adopted children of God ? Do we not know what efforts Satan employs to get possession of our soul ? Shall we not, then, set a right value on it, and strive to save it ? If we lose it, our loss will be irreparable, for our soul will be lost for all eternity. Here, in this world, the soul may make amends for its sins by repentance and good works ; but at death, when we pass from the sphere of Divine mercy and enter the other world, if we die in mortal sin, there will not be any longer time or place for repentance and amendment. Our judgment will be followed by our condemnation to suffer the everlasting torments of Hell. The prophet asks : ' Which of you can dwell with devouring fire ? which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings ?' (Isa. xxxiii. 14). To lose our soul, and to be cast into hell for all eternity, are one and the same thing. Do we not see now how disastrous and irremediable an evil it is to lose our soul ? When ages have succeeded ages, where, indeed, time is unknown, still will the souls of the lost be in anguish, despair, and suffering in the bottomless pit, never to leave it, and never to experience any relief or consolation ; for they will never merit one or the other.

Devout Christian, learn from this truth the infinity of God's justice, and the terrible and outrageous malice of men when they commit mortal sin.

III. Although the loss of a soul involves such terrible and irremediable consequences, how many men there are who neglect the work of their salvation ! Some men, rejecting the clear teaching of God's revelation in this matter, say that they cannot believe that the case is such ; they say that it would be too dreadful to have to believe that they will be lost and be in punishment for ever. Their denial of the truth will not alter it. Other men, believing the doctrine, refuse to remove the obstacles to their salvation, or to fulfil the conditions upon which it may be secured. How many men remain in the bondage of bad

habits ! How many will not avoid the dangerous occasions of sin ! How many love excessively the good things of this life ! How many break the laws of the Church ! How many neglect the duties of religion ! In all these ways they offend God and reject Him to satisfy themselves or to please creatures. Do they expect that God will receive them in the arms of His Love, and crown them in His kingdom ? Ah ! let all such persons remember that they have a soul to save, and that God has appointed conditions upon which He will receive them into His kingdom. They must not expect the heavenly reward if they reject God and break His law. St. Paul says : ' For he also, that striveth for the mastery, is not crowned except he strive lawfully ' (2 Tim. ii. 5).

Devout Christian, lament the blindness and fatal folly of men who live only for this world, and not for the world to come. They run after what is evil and after shadows, and they lose all heavenly and eternal goods. Pray to Mary, your loving Mother and Protectress, to save you from a like folly. Count no effort too great that will result in securing your salvation.

May 16

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT SALVATION—II.

I. It should afford us exceeding comfort to know that God wills our salvation, and that He makes every provision to enable us to secure it. He has not, indeed, withdrawn from us the gift of free-will, and therefore He does not compel us against our will to accomplish the work of our salvation. If we do not resist Him, if we do not disregard His Divine aid, He moves our will to correspond with His grace; He effectually abets our will in its effort. Without His grace we cannot do anything in the direct order to our salvation, but with it we can do everything. Two things, then, are necessary for our salvation—namely, God's grace, and our correspondence with it. God will not save those who do not efficaciously will to be saved, those who will not fulfil the conditions of salvation. Short of doing violence to our will, God will do everything needful to bring to effect His merciful designs for our salvation. The many and multiform dealings with us of His providence and of His mercy should convince and assure us of this. What a lesson teaching this consoling truth we have in God's long-suffering with miserable sinners, whom He does not cast off, but whom He brings to penance and reconciliation! To them He seems to say, as to Israel of old: 'Turn ye from your evil ways: and why will you die, O House of Israel?' (Ezech. xxxiii. 11).

Devout Christian, say with the prophet: 'Behold, God is my Saviour, I will deal confidently, and will not fear' (Isa. xii. 2). Ever praise the goodness of God, Who ceases not to watch over you, that He may bring to effect His loving designs in your regard. He will not fail you in the hour of temptation and in the day of distress, provided only

that you seek ever to please Him, to pray to Him, and to give glory to His Name.

II. If God had not willed to save us, He would never have sent His only-begotten Son into the world to assume our humanity, and to die for us ; nor would the Divine Son have poured out His precious Blood for us on the Cross. Why was the price of our reconciliation with God paid if not that we might be saved ? (Rom. v. 6-11). Now, through Christ's infinite satisfaction and merits, there are opened to us the ever-flowing fountains of God's mercy and grace. We drink of these fountains in the saving sacraments of Holy Church, administered through the ever-living priesthood of Jesus Christ. Witness those consoling sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, which we may receive again and again throughout our lifetime. Would it be thus if God did not will to save us ? We recognize the same end in view in all the other helps to salvation, such as the Holy Mass, the preaching of the Word of God, ' the comfort of the Scriptures ' (Rom. xv. 4), the intercession of the Saints, the many devotions of the Church, and the pastoral office. The means of sanctification which are so profuse, and so easily available, should forcibly impress on our minds the consoling truth that God makes every provision for our salvation, and that therefore He wills it. If men are not saved, it is their own fault, because they will not avail themselves of the means of salvation.

Devout Christian, acknowledge with gratitude to God the countless opportunities of acquiring grace which lie within your reach, all merited for you through the super-abundant merits of your loving Saviour (Eph. i. 7, 8). Frequently renew your good resolution of being assiduous in availing yourself of the means of grace.

III. It is profitable to reflect from time to time upon what the Saints did in order to work out their salvation. With what an example of self-denial and piety their lives furnish us ! They denied themselves many worldly pleasures, they underwent great hardships, they suffered calumnies, they practised austerities, they sacrificed them-

selves for their neighbour, and they devoted much time to prayer. A self-indulgent world criticizes their conduct; it declares that no doubt all this was well meant, but that it was superfluous. What an edifying spectacle is afforded by the martyrs who laid down their life rather than deny their faith; by noble Christian heroes who sacrificed their riches to works of religion and of charity; by gentle virgins who forsook all worldly advantages in order to live in chastity and retirement; and by merchants and princes who abandoned the world to lead a life of prayer and labour in the lonely places of a wilderness! Why was all this? Was it not that all these servants of God might make secure their salvation? God does not demand these sacrifices of all. His grace moved and sustained these His servants, and it will help us in that path of holy living by which we are to secure our salvation.

Devout Christian, take example by the conduct of the Saints, but be not discouraged if yours is not as perfect. Pray for humility, piety, and courage. Place yourself with confidence under Mary's care, and beseech her to obtain for you the grace to be at all times in earnest in availing yourself of the means of grace, with a view of making secure your salvation.

May 17.

NEGLECT OF SALVATION.

I. In our Lord's parable of the 'King who made a marriage for his son,' we read of those who were invited: 'But they neglected, and went their ways' (St. Matt. xxii. 5). These men represent men who neglect the work of their salvation; for they neglect God's invitation to the heavenly nuptials. Such neglect may arise from various causes. Some men do not give the matter sufficient thought. Their minds are full of schemes for their worldly advancement, and of plans for their pleasure. These men never weary of thinking about such things as earthly gains and satisfactions; but what concerns their sanctification and salvation is scarcely thought of. They may be said to make light of what relates to their salvation. Putting things into a balance, they evidently prefer the vanities and follies of the world to the spiritual blessings bestowed upon men who serve God and attend to their soul's interests. Therefore it comes to pass that, even when remorse of conscience strikes them, they cannot bring themselves to change their way of life. The current of worldliness carries them along, and their salvation is neglected.

Devout Christian, recognize the danger of this neglect. It is all the more fatal because it may not be attended with notable falls into vice, and men may therefore deceive themselves concerning their danger. Pray for light and grace ever to guide and support you in the way of your salvation.

II. There are men who recognize the duty of working out their salvation, but who put off attending to it. These know the conditions upon which they may expect to be saved, but they delay fulfilling them. If they are in sin, they should imitate the people of Nineveh in repenting

without delay; but they are unwilling to do this; they defer their repentance to a day they may never see. There is question of restraining their passions, of answering God's call to His service, of attending to the duties of religion, of doing penance, and of leading a new life; they are not prepared to do these things now. How sad is this neglect! The case is worse when men mean to defer their change of life till the time of their death. St. Paul warns them, saying: 'Be not deceived, God is not mocked' (Gal. vi. 7). If they have abused grace all through life, what claim can they reasonably lay to receive it at their death? Our Lord has said: 'Many are called, but few are chosen' (St. Matt. xxii. 14); do they, under such circumstances, expect to be among the few chosen? Only by a special mercy and extraordinary grace are sincere death-bed repentances effected. Who will plead for them, to obtain for them these Divine, unmerited favours?

Devout Christian, continue throughout life to plead for grace and mercy, and to seek to correspond with God's inspirations; thus will you prepare for yourself the comfort of a firm hope of salvation when the shadows of death fall on you.

III. What hope of salvation have men who persistently neglect the conditions of securing it? Upon what do they ground their hope? They may not ground it upon God's promises, for God warns men against neglecting their salvation. They may not ground their hope upon their own merits; for by their conduct they disregard God's claims upon their love and service. The parable says: 'The marriage indeed is ready: but they that were invited were not worthy' (St. Matt. xxii. 8). Men expect to be saved upon their own terms; they only deceive themselves. St. Paul, after naming various sins, went on to say: 'They who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God' (Gal. v. 21; 1 Cor. vi. 10; Eph. v. 5). Esau sold his birthright to his father's blessing for a mess of pottage; but sinners renounce their heirship to the kingdom of God for passing pleasures, or because they are unwilling to do what God's service demands. Too late will they see their

folly when, having been for years the slaves of a perverse will, and being, as it were, deeply embedded in a rut of spiritual indifference and neglect, death shall overtake them ; for even then they may not pray, and they may not be sincerely contrite. They will not be admitted to the heavenly nuptials if they have not on the marriage garment of the grace of Divine charity. Oh, let everything else be lost, provided only that Heaven be gained.

Devout Christian, look with sorrow and horror on the conduct of men who prepare for themselves the dismal lot of being numbered among the lost. Pray often for the conversion of sinners. In joy and in sorrow, in temptation and in tranquillity, in prosperity and adversity, do not lose sight of the heavenly goal, and pray for grace ever to live in God's grace. Beseech Mary, your heavenly Advocate with Jesus, to obtain for you strength to resist every evil temptation, and by grace to abide ever in our Lord, even as the branch abides in the vine.

May 18.

NO WEDDING GARMENT.

I. In the parable of the Marriage Feast we read how one of the guests had not on a wedding garment. The lord of the feast asked him to explain his conduct, but the man was silent (St. Matt. xxii. 12). He did not know what to say, for he had no valid excuse to offer. How will it be at our judgment, and before sentence is pronounced, if we are not able to give a good account of our conduct? How will it be if at our death, when we shall wish to pass to the heavenly nuptials, we have not on the wedding garment of grace? Ah, we, too, will then be silent, and sentence will be passed against us. What folly it was on the part of the man at the marriage feast to attempt to appear at it without a suitable garment! What folly, too, it is on the part of many Christians who break God's law and neglect the practice of religion to promise themselves a place at the heavenly banquet! for their lives are not in keeping with the heavenly destiny. Now, in the present life, they offer lying excuses for not praying and for not approaching the Holy Sacraments; now they deny their obligations, and make light of the precepts of God and of His Church; but when they shall stand in judgment they will find it impossible to offer satisfactory excuses for their neglect, and they will be silent.

Devout Christian, do not imitate the improvident who make no serious preparation for the future. God presses you to enter the heavenly banquet hall, and He will provide all the graces necessary to enable you to appear in it. But you have something to do. Do it, and do it well; then will you have on a suitable wedding garment.

II. To enter to take part at the heavenly banquet, we must show our fitness by our works, for empty words will

not suffice. Our professions of loving God must be borne out by our good works, done to worship Him and to please Him. The fact was quite evident, in the case of the man at the banquet, that he had not on the wedding garment. All his professions, all his protestations, all his excuses, had he made any, could not have altered that fact. And the fact carried with it his condemnation. So will it be with men at their judgment. If they have not the required good works to show, or the necessary repentance, their professions, protestations, and excuses will not save them from condemnation. Their works, and not their tongues, must speak for them. St. Paul says : ' Every man's work shall be manifest : for the day of the Lord shall declare it ' (1 Cor. iii. 13). Our Lord said : ' For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His Angels : and then will He render to every man according to His works ' (St. Matt. xvi. 27). It will be question of having done the things required by God as a condition of salvation : ' He that doth the will of My Father Who is in Heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven ' (St. Matt. vii. 21). If we imitate the unjust steward who wasted his master's goods, or if we imitate the servant who would not forgive his fellow-servant, but throttled him, then our evil works will condemn us. But if we imitate those who fed and clothed the poor, and comforted the distressed, then our good deeds will save us (St. Matt. xxv. 34, 35).

Devout Christian, see what is understood by having on the wedding garment. You have received the invitation to the banquet of everlasting life. Cling to a life of religion, and of good works, and you will not be found among those who have no wedding garment, and who will therefore have no place at the celestial banquet.

III. Different views will prevail at the day of judgment from those which the world would fain press upon our acceptance now. Let us not submit ourselves to the false views and deceptions of the world, nor let us make to ourselves a false conscience. The world is often afraid to censure conduct that is prejudicial to virtue ; it sometimes applauds what should be condemned, and it cannot speak

with authority on what is spiritual and on what concerns the everlasting future. Why, then, will men take the world for their guide ? Let us also mistrust nature ; its inclinations side rather with the flesh than with the spirit. Let us beware of conceiving a disrelish for religion and for spiritual effort. See the picture portrayed for us in the parable of the marriage feast. Of the friends who received the first invitations, some ' would not come ' (St. Matt. xxii. 3) ; others ' neglected and went their ways '; and others, again, laid hands on the messengers, ' and, having treated them contumeliously, put them to death.' God Himself, His Church, and its ministers, are often contemned, disregarded, and outraged, when they invite men to adopt the ways and means of attaining to eternal life. The spirit of worldliness, love of this world's gains and pleasures, and a base yielding to evil passions, causes men to neglect the invitation. They pursue their own way ; but it is not the right way ; it does not lead to the kingdom of God. How shall these men appear at the banquet wearing the wedding garment ?

Devout Christian, count it all gain to lose this world's goods and its esteem, provided only that you shall merit to hear our Lord say to you : ' Well done, good and faithful servant ' (St. Matt. xxv. 21). Commend yourself to Mary, the ' Mother of Divine Grace,' as she is styled, beseeching her to obtain for you the gift of perseverance in God's service.

May 19.

EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT—I.

I. That sinners who die impenitent will be lost everlastingly and suffer everlasting punishment is a doctrine of God's revelation, and therefore undeniably true. The unbelief of men does not change the doctrine nor affect the reality of the punishment. If men are eternally lost, it is of their own perversity; it is the punishment they bring upon themselves, because they refuse to believe what God teaches them through His Church, or because they will not obey His Law. It is written: 'Before man is life and death, good and evil; that which he shall choose shall be given him' (Ecclus. xv. 18). What does this mean? We may gather from these words that if, on the one hand, men disregard the conditions of salvation, they must take the terrible consequences; but that if, on the other hand, they faithfully fulfil those conditions, they will attain the heavenly reward. In our Lord's final sentence of eternal reprobation there is no question of only a temporary punishment. He will say to the wicked: 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire' . . . 'These shall go into everlasting punishment' (St. Matt. xxv. 41, 46). Some men will be lost, and some will be saved. Why should there be a judgment if, notwithstanding sin, all are to be saved? Justice must be done; Justice must triumph.

Devout Christian, humbly receive, and firmly hold, all the teachings of Divine revelation proposed by the Church. All are equally true. If God condemns, He condemns justly. David says: 'The judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves' (Ps. xviii. 10).

II. God's teaching does not leave men in ignorance as to the conditions under which they live. Rewards and punishment are necessary in the economy established by

God for His creatures, and both are everlasting. We cannot alter this. As it was in the case of the Angels, so shall it be in the case of men. The Angels were put on trial; they had to merit the everlasting reward. Many of them with Lucifer were lost; the remainder with Michael were saved. By God's eternal and unalterable decree, Heaven is the reward of justice, and Hell is the punishment of perversity. When men knowingly and deliberately elect to do evil, they thereby reject God as their King Whom they are bound to serve, and as their Heavenly Father Whom they are bound to love. While they remain unrepentant they are by their own act separated from God, and are without sanctifying grace. They have taken their part, which is the rejection of God; they therefore choose to spend their eternity without Him. It was said to the Jewish people: 'Because thou didst not serve the Lord thy God with joy and gladness of heart for the abundance of all things: Thou shalt serve thy enemy . . . in hunger and thirst and nakedness, and in want of all things' (Deut. xxviii. 47, 48). So shall it happen to the wicked who die impenitent. They reject the Sovereign and Everlasting Good, and their lot is then with the wicked in everlasting punishment.

Devout Christian, renew your belief in the doctrine of eternal recompense and eternal punishment. Eternal, then, are the two issues which follow our present passing existence. How foolish and perverse are those men who disregard the terms of salvation, and thus fail to secure the reward apportioned to the just.

III. God's justice is equally a Divine perfection with His mercy and His goodness, and equally to be admired, praised, and adored. God will judge all men with even justice—the just and the wicked—and He will apportion to all according to their deserts. Is it wonderful that God should fulfil justice in our regard, and thereupon measure out punishment or reward? Are we so foolish as to believe that His promises and His threats mean nothing? As He will of necessity bestow upon the just the heavenly reward according to His promise, will He not

also of very necessity execute against the wicked the threats He has pronounced? The execution of His sentence is certain and inevitable. He Himself says: 'There is none that can deliver out of My hand' (Deut. xxxii. 39). Alas, then, for the wicked! The prophet says: 'Woe to the wicked unto evil, for the reward of his hands shall be given him' (Isa. iii. 11). And the Apostle says: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God' (Heb. x. 31). Our Lord said: 'I will show you whom you shall fear: fear ye Him Who, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into Hell. Yea I say to you, fear Him' (St. Luke xii. 5). God asks through His prophet: 'Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' (Isa. xxxiii. 14). Man should prefer any labour, any sacrifice, any penance, rather than to deserve God's everlasting punishments. We all have to be judged. Hence arises our fear. Only an assuring revelation can tranquillize our mind. St. Augustine said: 'Here cut, here burn, O Lord, provided only that Thou save me hereafter.'

Devout Christian, God's punishments are not for His faithful servants, but for the wicked. The thought of them should strengthen you in your good purposes of ever loving and serving God. Recommend yourself with earnestness to your loving heavenly Mother, Mary, and beg through her intercession the grace never to fall away from grace, nor to incur God's anger.

May 20.

EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT—II.

I. God's revelation makes known to us concerning everlasting punishment that it involves everlasting separation from God or the loss of God, and some actual pain endured by the bodies and souls of the reprobate, which is caused by the fire of Hell. The sinner, while on earth, by his own act, chose to abandon God, and while thus voluntarily separated from God, and made His enemy, he passed from life to God's judgment-seat. The time for repentance and reconciliation had gone by, and there remained only for the sinner to continue separated from God, unrepentant, and to receive his sentence of condemnation. The sinner will be deprived of God, and of all that is good, for all eternity. The pains of Hell are described as fire, exterior darkness, gnashing of teeth, and the undying worm. Where our Lord tells us of the rich man and Lazarus, He says: 'The rich man also died: and he was buried in Hell. . . . And he cried, and said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame' (St. Luke xvi. 22, 24). From this we learn that Hell is a place of torments. Holy Church does not, in her teaching, particularize the kinds of torments; but this is not of present moment. The companionship of demons and of other reprobate creatures will render the torments of Hell more intolerable.

Devout Christian, look upon this revelation as one of special goodness and mercy; for it should so impress itslef on your mind as to urge you to use every effort to avoid mortal sin. It should also excite your charity towards sinners, to lead you, as far as your opportunities allow, to save them from this eternity of woe.

II. The separation of the just from the wicked, their being placed on different sides of the Supreme Judge, and the difference of their sentences, show us that their lot for all eternity is apart. 'These shall go into everlasting punishment: but the just into life everlasting.' To deny that the wicked shall suffer everlastingly, or that the just shall be happy everlastingly, would be blasphemy against the truth of our Lord's teaching. Abraham said to the reprobate rich man: 'Between us and you there is fixed a great chaos: so that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot, nor from thence come hither' (St. Luke xvi. 26). The lost have rendered themselves unworthy of Heaven, and they never will, and shall never be able, to render themselves worthy of it. They have died in their sins, and they will never repent efficaciously of them. Where they have fallen, there shall they lie. Solomon says: 'If the tree fall to the south, or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be' (Eccles. xi. 3). While their sins remain unremitted, they bind the lost down to their apportioned punishment. Our Lord tells us of a sin that 'shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come' (St. Matt. xii. 32). 'He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, shall never have forgiveness, but shall be guilty of an everlasting sin' (St. Mark iii. 29). While the sin remains, God remains irritated against the sinner, and cannot be reconciled with him. God, then, by a most just judgment condemns the impenitent sinner to everlasting punishment. This punishment will endure as long as the sinner's fault remains. It will therefore be eternal in its duration.

Devout Christian, recognize in mortal sin, inasmuch as it is an offence against an Infinite Being, a certain character of infinity. The sinner's outrage is offered not to a fellow-creature, but to God who is infinitely above all His creatures. The measure of the punishment must be accordingly. Pray with David in all humility: 'Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy.'

III. St. Jude speaks of the wicked being 'reserved under darkness in everlasting chains,' and 'suffering the punish-

ment of eternal fire' (St. Jude i. 6, 7); but we must yet recognize that there may be different degrees of suffering. And because all the reprobate are condemned according to the amount of their guiltiness, which is not the same in all, the kind or intensity of torment to which they are sentenced will be different. No punishment will be in excess of what is deserved, every punishment being according to the most just sentence of Infinite and Eternal Justice. The reprobate will cease to be the objects of God's love; they fall under His eternal anger. No words of sorrow will ever pass from their lips, but words of hatred and of blasphemy. There will never be any redeeming feature in the intensity of their torments to afford them comfort, and never shall the faintest glimmer of hope shine in upon the darkness of their everlasting despair. O miserable sinner, will you persistently remain in your sins, and bring upon yourselves such terrible punishment? It is written: 'Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day. For His wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee' (Ecclus. v. 8, 9).

Devout Christian, ever walk circumspectly, and guard your soul from evil. Let no passion, perversity, or human respect lead you to compromise your salvation, thus to expose you to the risk of any fatal fall. Place yourself with confidence under the protection of Mary, and ask her to obtain for you a lasting hatred of every kind of evil, and a firm determination to pursue the safe path of dutifulness and piety.

May 21.

HEAVEN—I.

1. If there are subjects which fill the mind with awe or misgiving, there is one which affords unmixed delight, and this is the heavenly recompense. How comforting it is for us, from the midst of scenes of toil, temptation, suffering, and sorrow, to raise our thoughts to the bright and happy scenes of our future reward! When we do this, we bid ourselves be valiant, patient, and constant; for our present trials rightly borne merit for us untold bliss, and our few years of service are to be succeeded by an eternity of glory. We do not now see God, Whom we know, love, and serve; but in due time we shall pass from faith to vision, and then we shall see and enjoy God face to face in the light of glory, and we shall be with Him for ever. Let us think of these things, and relish the comfort which the thought of them will bring us. Faith teaches us that the souls of the just, when freed from every stain of sin, and when they shall have expiated all their faults, will be admitted to the beatific vision. They will reach then the goal of their desires; they will attain their glorious destiny, and Heaven will thenceforth be their home. Their existence will be closely bound up in an ineffable manner with the existence of God, for He will be their 'reward exceeding great' (Gen. xv. 1).

Devout Christian, ever nourish your soul with the desire of seeing God, and of being with Him in Heaven. The days of your earthly pilgrimage will, in God's own time, come to an end. Direct your life Heavenwards, and your efforts will not be in vain. Say with David: 'When shall I come and appear before the face of God?' (Ps. xli. 3).

II. How shall we describe Heaven? We must declare it to be a blissful abode. The contrast between our present

life of vicissitude and care and our future life of peace and joy is too great to be understood now. This led St. Paul to say: 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him' (1 Cor. ii. 9). Heaven's joys are incomparably beyond those which earthly scenes, harmony, beauty, perfumes, or delicacies can afford us. There are delights there for which we have no name. When we consider that we there enjoy God Himself, we recognize that it is vain to pretend to understand the bliss of Paradise. There will not be in Heaven the faintest shadow of anything that might lessen the happiness of the Blessed. 'There shall not enter into it anything defiled' (Apoc. xxi. 27). 'And death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow' (Apoc. xxi. 4). While, on the one hand, there will not be in Heaven anything that might cause distress or misgiving, there will, on the other hand, be everything to afford the most exquisite and abundant delight. David says: 'Oh, taste, and see that the Lord is sweet' (Ps. xxxiii. 9). Even now God's servants have experienced in some measure His sweetness; but in the bliss of Heaven He will grant His Elect to taste that sweetness in overflowing measure. With the possession and enjoyment of Himself, God will, moreover, bestow heavenly gifts and pleasures of every kind and variety, and He will fully satisfy all our desires. Then shall the Saints in Sion 'rejoice with exceeding great joy' (Ps. cxxxi. 16).

Devout Christian, lament the folly of sinners, seeing that by their wickedness they lose all right to the heavenly inheritance. They prefer the evil satisfactions of the passing hour to the pure, holy, and satisfying joys of the heavenly kingdom. Be resolved ever to avoid and to regard with detestation everything that can snatch from you the immeasurable bliss destined for God's Elect.

III. Among the comforts and satisfactions of Paradise is a sense of perfect peace and repose. Peace has its abode, not on earth, where there are so many things to disturb man's heart and life, but in Heaven, where man reposes in God's bosom. St. Paul says: 'Tribulation and anguish

upon every soul of man that worketh evil. . . . But glory and honour and peace to every one that worketh good' (Rom. ii. 9, 10). St. John heard a voice from Heaven declaring that the dead should 'rest from their labours' (Apoc. xiv. 13). At death the time for labour is gone by for ever, and the just admitted into Heaven enter into a condition of the most delightful repose. They are not there alone; they are associated with the Blessed, all of whom are glorified and adorned with beauty, sweetness, and every perfection. Then there exists among all the Elect the most perfect union and charity, and this constitutes one of the delights of Paradise. All are united among themselves, and united, too, in rendering love, praise, and thanksgiving to God. David said: 'The Saints shall rejoice in glory: they shall be joyful in their beds. The high praises of God shall be in their mouth' (Ps. cxlix. 5, 6). Yet another source of joy to the Blessed will be the assurance of their lasting estate. They enjoy the certainty that their happiness will never diminish, and that it will be everlasting.

Devout Christian, reflect with delight, with hope, and with gratitude, upon the prospect of the heavenly reward. Say with David: 'How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord' (Ps. lxxxiii. 2, 3). Beseech Mary, the Queen of Heaven, to obtain for you the graces you need to direct your life with constancy in the path that leads to Heaven. Be comforted by the thought that you will there see your heavenly Mother in her glory, and rejoice with her for ever.

May 22.

HEAVEN — II.

I. Although all the Blessed in Heaven see and enjoy God, there are yet various degrees of glory, as there are various degrees of merit. God rewards His servants according to the holiness they have attained, and according to their works. It therefore follows that, as they differ in these respects, one being more perfect than another, and one having acquired more merits than another, so shall they accordingly enjoy in different degrees the beatific vision and the other joys of Paradise. God Himself is the inexhaustible and eternally incomprehensible source of the happiness of the Blessed; and from this source shall they everlastingly derive the full measure of their beatitude, everyone according to his capacity. Everyone shall have that capacity which God will bestow by the light of glory. This light will not shine with the same brilliancy upon every one of the Blessed; but it will be communicated with greater or less brilliancy according to the diversity of their merits, and to the measure of their charity at their death. St. Paul says: 'Star differeth from star in glory' (1 Cor. xv. 41); and our Lord said: 'In My Father's house there are many mansions' (St. John xiv. 2). Wise, then, were the Saints in the efforts they made to satisfy for their sins, to acquire greater purity of soul, to multiply their good works, and to attain perfection. They have received the greater measure of happiness in Heaven.

Devout Christian, be you also as wise. Do homage to God's infinite justice, displayed in the reward bestowed on the Blessed. Recall St. Paul's words: 'Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour' (1 Cor. iii. 8). Strive to increase your reward.

II. The heavenly happiness exceeds in kind, in measure,

and in duration, every other happiness. The joys of Heaven will never decrease in their fulness or intensity, and the Blessed will never tire of them ; nor will these joys ever cease. If they were ever to cease, even after millions of years, the thought of this would create an incurable sorrow, Heaven would not be Heaven, and our belief in ' life everlasting ' would be vain. St. Peter says : ' Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His great mercy hath regenerated us unto a lively hope. . . . Unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that can never fade, reserved in Heaven ' (1 St. Pet. i. 3, 4). From the moment of our first possession of the heavenly reward, our capacity for happiness and for every celestial gift and enjoyment will be fully satisfied, and this will continue to be so for all eternity. There will not be in Heaven any effort to increase our beatitude ; for where there is complete repose and full happiness, there will be no regrets, and no wishing or striving for more happiness than God bestows. Moreover, the time for labour and for merit will have ceased to be. In this life we are labouring to attain our end, and to fulfil our destiny ; but in Heaven that end will have been attained, and there will not be any further end at which to aim. The infinite variety of Heaven's joys will not create any change in the condition of the Blessed. They will be established for ever in an unchangeable state of beatitude, in which they will ever know, possess, love, and enjoy God, and rejoice in the companionship of our Blessed Lady and of the Angels and Saints.

Devout Christian, say with holy David : ' Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest ?' (Ps. liv. 7). But leave yourself in God's hands until the appointed time. In the meantime be resolved to ' labour the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election ' (2 St. Pet. i. 10).

III. Until the end of the world and the final consummation of God's designs in regard of His Elect the Church will exist in its three parts, forming, however, only one Church. The Church Triumphant in Heaven is bound by the closest

May 23.

SEEKING GOD'S FACE.

I. We should continually go in spirit before God, to offer Him our homage and love, and to seek His favour, aid, and mercy. We hear David exclaim : 'My heart hath said to Thee : my face hath sought Thee : Thy face, O Lord, will I still seek. Turn not away Thy face from me' (Ps. xxvi. 8, 9). The face of God is one we should seek earnestly, that we may be blest. We must not fail in our dutiful homage, which we should render joyfully. We pay this homage when we worship God in private prayer, and in the public services and devotions of the Church, and when for God's sake we make offerings for the maintenance of religion or works of charity. It is written : 'Let us joyfully sing to God our Saviour. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving : and make a joyful noise to Him with psalms' (Ps. xciv. 1, 2). God's command of old was : 'No one shall appear with his hands empty before the Lord : but every one shall offer according to what he hath' (Deut. xvi. 16, 17). There are, alas, many men who fail to seek God's face with their praise and their gifts. Others make some show of religion, but their hearts are not right with God ; and to them God says : 'If you offer Me holocausts, and your gifts, I will not receive them' (Amos v. 22).

Devout Christian, let not God be as a stranger to you, but ever seek His face earnestly and lovingly. Ever address your loving Saviour in pious worship with confidence and with desires of the heavenly union. Say with the Beloved in the Canticles : 'Show me Thy face, let Thy voice sound in my ears : for Thy voice is sweet, and Thy face is comely' (Cant. ii. 14).

II. We should seek God's face in our many needs. We may pray with David : 'Turn not away Thy face from me :

in the day when I am in trouble, incline Thine ear to me' (Ps. ci. 3). While striving by all legitimate means for temporal blessings, we must not fail to supplicate God to favour our efforts. It should comfort us to lay our petitions before Him Who alone can grant them. David tells us that he did not appeal to God in vain: 'Neither hath He turned away His face from me: and when I cried to Him, He heard me' (Ps. xxi. 25). If we are God's friends, our distresses will move the Divine compassion, and in seasonable time our prayers will be heard. We should also seek God's face when we have sinned and are moved to repentance. We shall not seek mercy in vain. David prayed: 'Cast me not away from Thy face' (Ps. l. 13). 'Convert us, O God: and show us Thy face, and we shall be saved' (Ps. lxxix. 4); and his prayer was heard. God will also hear the supplication of every repentant sinner when with becoming dispositions he prays: 'Though my sins are many, though my unworthiness is so great, do not despise me, do not drive me away from Thee.' Then will God's face be turned once more upon him.

Devout Christian, do not weary of seeking God's face in your many necessities, and when you have been so unhappy as to commit any fault. God will show you favour and mercy; He will support you under the burdens of life; and He will continue to watch over you with the bountifulness of His providence. Desire these blessings for yourself: they will be the reward of your seeking God's face.

III. God has taken a human heart and also a human face. This face is the one Mary loved to gaze upon. It was upturned towards her from the manger in the stable at Bethlehem, and it was downturned upon her from the Cross on Calvary. When the Apostles looked upon this face on Thabor, it 'did shine as the sun' (St. Matt. xvii. 2). All Christ's followers long to see that beautiful face. We must seek that face by walking in the light of our Lord's holy teaching, and in the ways of holy living. We must first pass through the days and years of this present life, and then through the portals of death, before we can see it. When once we are given to enjoy its sight in the king-

dom where Christ dwells with His elect, we shall never afterwards be deprived of the vision. Let it be our care now not to do what would turn that face from us, but, by avoiding sin and walking in the path of dutifulness and piety to win for ourselves the comforting assurance of beholding the Divine face of Jesus in the heavenly kingdom. Even now that sacred face is turned with love towards the just and towards repentant sinners. It is both merciful and tender towards all that seek it in sincerity. David prayed : ' Show us Thy face, and we shall be saved ' (Ps. lxxix. 4) ; ' I entreated Thy face with all my heart ' (Ps. cxviii. 58).

Devout Christian, comfort your soul in your distress by the thought of Christ's present goodness and compassion, and of your future happiness. Say with David : ' When shall I come and appear before the face of God ?' (Ps. xli. 3). Be ever devout to Mary, and ask her to intercede for you, that you may not be carried away by any inordinate love of creatures, but may ever love God above all, and merit the heavenly vision.

May 24.

OUR LADY, HELP OF CHRISTIANS.

I. Holy Church teaches us to have recourse to the ever-blessed Virgin Mary in times of danger, especially when any universal evil is feared. We call upon her in her Litany as the 'Help of Christians.' Seeing the evils that beset the Church and society in these times, we should have fervent and constant recourse to Mary's powerful intercession for grace not to fall under their influence, but to be ever preserved uncontaminated in the liveliness and vigour of Catholic faith and piety. We find through Mary a sure and acceptable means of reaching the loving Heart of the Divine Son; and in Mary herself we have an intercessor full of tenderness, watchfulness, and compassion. Hers is a mother's heart ever open to the cry of her children. The Saints, and among them the learned and pious Doctors of the Church, teach us to revere Mary, and to seek the aid of her intercession. They were not content only to do honour to her incomparable dignity, but they also placed entire confidence in her maternal love and most efficacious advocacy. In Rome, the central and most exalted See in the Church, may be found on every side evidences of the tradition of this devotion and of this confidence, and to-day the Catholic people of that city maintain still a most fervent devotion to the ever-blessed Mother of our Saviour.

Devout Christian, you are a wayfarer needing protection, but you are not without a powerful Protectress. Thank God for having given you Mary to watch over you, and to help you by her prayers. Join with the faithful children of the Church in every age in imploring her protection.

II. The Roman pontiffs have shown special confidence in Mary's protection of the Church in troublous times. Thus, when the Turks threatened the destruction of Chris-

tian nations under the pontificate of St. Pius V., that holy Pontiff had recourse to Mary, and invited the faithful to unite with him in imploring Mary's advocacy for the Church. To answer to her prayers he attributed the glorious victory of Lepanto, when the Turkish fleet was defeated and rendered impotent to achieve the destruction for which it had been organized. Upon that occasion the saintly Pontiff added to the invocations of our Lady's Litany the title 'Help of Christians.' In the disorders of Christendom and troublous times of revolution under Pope Pius VII. once again recourse was had to Mary's intercession. Upon two occasions the persecuted Pontiff was unexpectedly brought back from exile, and entered Rome amidst the plaudits of the people. In token of the gratitude of the Church to its heavenly Protectress, the Sovereign Pontiff established the feast of our Lady under the title of 'Help of Christians.' This instructive title has become dear to the faithful, and our Lady, under this invocation, is now honoured as principal Patroness of various parts of the Church—as in Australia, and in the Dioceses of Shrewsbury and Menevia.

Devout Christian, let the history of Mary's triumphs over the enemies of the Church engage your attention and interest, and inspire you with courage while you continue to regard Mary as your heavenly Protectress. Ever join fervently with the faithful in reciting any prayers for the Church which may be prescribed by the Sovereign Pontiff or by the local Ordinary.

III. The faithful should be inspired with confidence in Mary's prayers, because of the name of Christian which they bear. If, as St. Paul teaches us (Rom. xii. 5; 1 Cor. xii. 27), we belong to the Body of Christ, and are members of Christ, we cannot but believe that, as such, we are dear to Mary. If, as the same Apostle assures us, God our Saviour 'will have all men to be saved' (1 Tim. ii. 4), we are confident that Mary, too, is desirous of our salvation. Mary knows better than any other creature how much our Lord loves us, and the price He has paid for our salvation. She knows that we belong to her Divine Son by reason of

His having created us, and of His having purchased us with His precious Blood. We are therefore confident that Mary will watch over us with special love, and seek by her powerful advocacy to obtain for us grace and mercy, and every aid needful for our salvation. Christians, however, who by reason of their bad lives are unworthy of the name, may not count upon Mary's help while they remain hardened and impenitent. Let them turn from their evil ways if they would experience the comfort of her prayers and protection. Happy, on the other hand, are those who constantly invoke Mary's intercession. She seems to say to them, in the words of Holy Writ: 'Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits' (Ecclus. xxiv. 26).

Devout Christian, be comforted by the thought that you have your place in Mary's affection and care. She will be your helper in the straits of life against the enemies of your salvation. Invoke her with special confidence as the 'Help of Christians,' and her prayers will be your protection in the hour of danger, and your aid in the time of need.

May 25.

OUR LORD'S ASCENSION—I.

I. BESIDES the prophecies telling what should be our Lord's sufferings, there were also others concerning His entrance into Heaven. David said: 'Lift up your gates, O ye Princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of Glory shall enter in' (Ps. xxiii. 7); 'God is ascended with jubilee, and the Lord with the sound of the trumpet. . . . God sitteth on His holy throne' (Ps. xlvi. 6, 9); 'Thou hast ascended on high, hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts in men' (Ps. lxvii. 19). To our Lord's ascension and the events accompanying it we may apply the words of Micheas (ii. 13): 'He shall go up that shall open the way before them: they shall divide, and pass through the gate, and shall come in by it: and their King shall pass before them, and the Lord at the head of them.' St. Mark records the actual event with these words: 'And the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken up to Heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God' (xvi. 19). St. Luke, however, in the Acts of the Apostles, gives fuller particulars. He tells us of our Lord's last conversation with His disciples on Mount Olivet (Acts i. 12), and he then adds: 'And when He had said these things, while they looked on, He was raised up: and a cloud received Him out of their sight.' Elsewhere the same Evangelist says: 'And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up to Heaven' (St. Luke xxiv. 51).

Devout Christian, let your soul expand with joy in contemplating your Saviour's ascension into Heaven. 'Sing ye to God, Who mounteth above the Heaven of heavens' (Ps. lxvii. 34). Rejoice that His noble mission on earth has been fully accomplished, and that He now enters into His glory. Praise Him for all His works, saying with

David : ' Thy magnificence is elevated above the heavens ' (Ps. viii. 2).

II. Our Lord's ascension was wonderful and glorious in the eyes of the Apostles. They treasured His parting words and final benediction. For the moment the pang of parting was overcome and soothed by the joy of so admirable a spectacle. Perhaps they recalled our Lord's words : ' No man hath ascended into Heaven but He that descended from Heaven, the Son of man Who is in Heaven ! (St. John iii. 13) ; ' If then you shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before ?' (vi. 63). They continued gazing upon the receding figure of their Lord, Who was returning to His kingdom above. The Heavenly Father invited Him : ' The Lord said to my Lord : Sit Thou at My right hand ' (Ps. cix. 1). ' And while they were beholding Him going up to Heaven, behold two men stood by them in white garments. Who also said : Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to Heaven ? This Jesus Who is taken up from you into Heaven shall so come as you have seen Him going into Heaven ' (Acts i. 10, 11). Then the Apostles, ' adoring, went back into Jerusalem with great joy ' (St. Luke xxiv. 52). Their faith was mightily strengthened, their hope in our Lord's many promises and in His sustaining help was increased, and their hearts beat warm with earnest affection for their loving Lord. The Apostles knew, too, that Jesus had gone to Heaven to send down upon them the Holy Ghost, Who should bestow upon them heavenly gifts.

Devout Christian, unite yourself in spirit with the Apostles witnessing your Lord's ascension. Renew your faith in this admirable mystery of your holy religion, and in the promises of the heavenly inheritance which it confirms to all God's elect. Be faithful to that holy bond of faith and charity which unites you to Christ, and thank your Divine Saviour for numbering you among His disciples.

III. The souls of the just to whom our Lord had preached in Limbo (1 St. Pet. iii. 19) were now transferred from their temporary abode of rest to the heavenly kingdom for

which they had long sighed. Our Lord led them to the celestial gates: ascending on high, He 'led captivity captive' (Ps. lxvii. 19). From Abel to St. Joseph, St. John the Baptist, and the Good Thief, how many were the just who awaited the day of their triumph! How wonderful are the ways of God! He has His times and His appointments for all His creatures. Let us not seek to know the secrets of the Divine Mind, but let us dutifully leave ourselves in God's hands. It is written: 'The souls of the just are in the hands of God, and the torment of death shall not touch them' (Wisd. iii. 1). Let us be comforted by our Lord's promise to His followers: 'I give them life everlasting: and they shall not perish for ever, and no man shall pluck them out of My hand' (St. John x. 28). When we think of the obscurity of the future, let us reassure ourselves by considering the benevolent providence of God for the just of the Old Dispensation, and the comforting promises made by our Lord to His followers under the New Dispensation. O happy day for the holy patriarchs and prophets! Who shall describe the joy which inundated their souls as they passed with their Saviour into the presence of God, and into the enjoyment of everlasting bliss? Their assistance at the sacred and glorious pageant, as trophies of Christ's victory, as He took possession of His kingdom, added solemnity to the event. The day of the everlasting dominion of Christ, and of the everlasting homage of all His servants, has begun: 'The Lord hath prepared His throne in Heaven: and His kingdom shall rule over all' (Ps. cii. 19).

Devout Christian, render your devout and loving homage to your King and Saviour as He takes possession of His heavenly and everlasting kingdom. Rejoice in the glory which surrounds Him, and take comfort from the lessons afforded by His triumph. Beseech your heavenly Mother Mary to obtain for you the grace never to barter your heavenly inheritance for any passing distinctions, gains, or pleasures, but ever to cling to the ways of true religiousness, supported by a firm hope of eternal life.

May 26.

OUR LORD'S ASCENSION—II.

I. It is written: 'Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, and Thy glory above the earth' (Ps. lvi. 6). Our Lord's humiliations, labours, and sufferings are over, and now, at His ascension, He enters into His glory. In His sacred humanity He triumphs over all His enemies, and rises high above all His creatures, magnificent in His glory and irresistible in His might. 'All power is given to Me in Heaven and in earth' (St. Matt. xxviii. 18). St. Paul speaks of God's 'operation of the might of His power, which He wrought in Christ, raising Him up from the dead, and setting Him on His right hand in the heavenly places, above all principality and power, and virtue, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And He hath subjected all things under His feet' (Eph. i. 19-22). David said: 'With Thee is the principality in the day of Thy strength' (Ps. cix. 3). The blessed spirits render to Christ joyous homage around His throne, and there are none to dispute His everlasting sway over all His creatures. 'Bless the Lord, all ye His Angels: you that are mighty in strength, and execute His word, hearkening to the voice of His orders' (Ps. cii. 20). Our Lord's ascension is an event which should fill all the just with joy and hope; for now is His empire established, and the just may confidently expect their salvation. When they contemplate the glorious crowning of mysteries which were shrouded in lowliness and suffering in Bethlehem and on Calvary, they see why they should embrace with patience the dispensations of sorrow and suffering which weigh heavily on them now, being assured that they lead to happier and more glorious things hereafter.

Devout Christian, dutifully acknowledge your Saviour,

crowned 'with glory and honour' (Ps. viii. 6) in Heaven as your King, and in spirit join with all the Angels in offering Him your homage. Rejoice in the Divine embrace which He receives from His Heavenly Father upon His mounting upon His everlasting throne. Now is His prayer heard: 'Glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself' (St. John xvii. 5).

II. While our Lord's ascension brings joy to the just, it should fill the wicked with fear; for the might of God's arm that shall rule all things for the good of them who love Him will inflict upon the wicked their merited punishment. To Christ seated on His everlasting throne the Heavenly Father now says: 'The Lord will send forth the sceptre of Thy power out of Sion: rule Thou in the midst of Thy enemies' (Ps. cix. 2). Not in vain, nor without meaning, did our Lord Himself say: 'Fear Him that can destroy both soul and body into Hell' (St. Matt. x. 28). Alas for those who, though called to Christ's standard to enjoy the blessing of salvation, yet deny him, oppose Him, neglect His service, and even blaspheme His adorable Name! 'There is no other Name under Heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved' (Acts iv. 12). Alas, then, for those who mock His power, and despise His love! Alas for those who close their ears to His saving truths, and their eyes to the testimony of His works! Alas for those who shut out His light, and, hardening their hearts and consciences, turn away from Him! Alas for the wicked, who, having received His grace, have lost it or abused it, and who, having the knowledge of His law, have broken and despised that law! All these have reason to fear, seeing Christ ascend to the seat of His glory, for it is impossible that He will permit Himself to be disregarded and contemned with impunity. All these wicked are they who shall one day 'say to the mountains: Fall upon us; and to the hills: Cover us' (St. Luke xxiii. 30).

Devout Christian, cling to Christ's standard. Keep in your mind our Lord's consoling promise to faithful souls: 'They shall walk with Me in white, because they are worthy. He that shall overcome shall thus be clothed in

white garments, and I will not blot His name out of the book of life, and I will confess His name before My Father, and before His Angels ' (Apoc. iii. 4, 5). Despise all things for His love and for His rewards.

III. After His resurrection our Lord sent word to His Apostles : ' I ascend to My Father and to your Father, to My God and your God ' (St. John xx. 17). That same sacred alliance which made Christ our Brother secures for us the dignity of being also co-heirs with Him to the heavenly kingdom. At His ascension our Lord opened those gates of the heavenly paradise which had been closed against man. Having by His death reconciled us with His Father, He at His ascension removed all barriers to our enjoying the everlasting benefits of His victory. By His entry into Heaven, and by His sitting at the right hand of His Father, He exalted our humanity. To Christ David said in prophecy : ' With Thy comeliness and Thy beauty set out, proceed prosperously and reign ' (Ps. xliv. 5). His work has ended in His eternal reign. Thus, too, should it be with us. Lowliness, poverty, weakness, and misery were our only birthright ; but through Christ our humanity has been lifted up, and we have been made rich, strong, and happy. Through Him, too, our everlasting destiny is to reign with Himself in the glory and bliss of the heavenly paradise. Ascending into Heaven, He went to prepare a place for His elect (St. John xiv. 2). Therefore St. Paul says : ' God hath not appointed us unto wrath, but unto the purchasing of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us : that whether we watch or sleep, we may live together with Him. For which cause comfort one another ' (1 Thess. v. 9-11).

Devout Christian, ever aspire to the everlasting kingdom. Let no earthly pleasure or gain rob you of the heavenly inheritance. Ever thank your loving Saviour for the graces, consolations, and rewards which are your happy portion ; and pray that you may not forfeit them by any folly or perversity. Beg of Mary, Queen of Heaven, to further your salvation by her constant protection and intercession.

May 27.

OUR LORD'S ASCENSION—III.

I. We rejoice in our Lord's ascension because our Lord mounted the heavens to shine down upon us as the Sun of Justice. He does this as our Advocate with the Father. He said after His Last Supper: 'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and I go to the Father' (St. John xvi. 28). He came for our sake, and He returned also for our sake; for now from the bosom of the Eternal Father He addresses in our behalf everlasting pleadings. There shine down upon us rays of hope, mercy, and consolation. Perhaps we have not always corresponded with God's loving designs in our regard; we have even lost the grace of our Baptism; we have repeatedly lost the sanctifying grace restored in Penance, and we have turned away from our Lord after having received Him in the Holy Eucharist. What, then, will become of us? St. John bids us yet hope, for he says: 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ' (1 St. John ii. 1). If only we repent, our Lord's pleadings will obtain our forgiveness and our reconciliation with God. Our Lord pleaded once from the Cross; He pleads continually from the bosom of His Father in Heaven. He said while on earth: 'I am not come to call the just, but sinners' (St. Matt. ix. 13); and now in Heaven He points to all His sacred sufferings and wounds, offering them again and again to avert God's anger, and to obtain His mercy. Thus, although our Lord has parted from us, we may yet say that He is ever with us; for we continue to experience proofs of His love, compassion, and mercy, and to enjoy the fruits of His sufferings and death.

Devout Christian, often raise up your thoughts, your heart, and your voice to your Saviour in Heaven. Look

forward with hope to the end of your sojourning, and long to reach the goal of your soul's holiest desires. Be comforted meanwhile with the thought of our Lord's love of you and of His powerful advocacy on your behalf.

II. Who shall doubt the effectiveness of our Lord's pleading? Only our own obduracy, or neglect of grace, or wilful perversity, will deprive it of its effect. Will not His acceptable advocacy merit the conversion of sinners? Will it not avail to secure the salvation of all who have repented of their sins? Why, then, should we feel alarm? Our Lord's advocacy is efficacious, because of His own infinite merits, and because by reason of His dignity He is worthy to be heard. Moreover, His prayers are addressed to the tenderest of Fathers, Who not only loves His only-begotten Son, but who also desires to show us His mercy and His bounty. St. Paul would comfort us with the thought that we shall not fall under condemnation, seeing that our Advocate is 'Christ Jesus that died, yea, that is risen also again, Who is at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us' (Rom. viii. 34). He says: 'There is now therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh' (viii. 1). He repeats this assurance where he treats of Christ's priesthood, showing that Christ, since He 'continueth for ever, hath an everlasting priesthood, whereby He is able also to save for ever them that come to God by Him: always living to make intercession for us' (Heb. vii. 24, 25). This our High Priest, St. Paul tells us, 'is set on the right hand of the throne of Majesty in the heavens' (viii. 1). Well may we rejoice on the day of His ascending on high; for then did He become 'surety' (vii. 22) for His brethren, and 'the Mediator of the New Testament: that by means of His death . . . they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance' (ix. 15). 'For Jesus is not entered into the Holies made with hands, the patterns of the true: but into Heaven itself, that He may appear now in the presence of God for us' (ix. 24).

Devout Christian, recognize with gratitude the consoling truth that Christ has entered Heaven to fill you with a

firm hope of attaining the everlasting reward. From His throne there He showers upon you the treasures of His grace. For His sake God loves you and blesses you.

III. All things have yielded to Christ's irresistible might, and all His Saints proclaim His victory. He has broken through the captivity of the tomb and the bonds of death itself, and before Him have the eternal gates of Heaven opened wide. The mighty Princes of the celestial kingdom have acknowledged His principality, and all the blessed have worshipped at His throne. O Christians, shall your hearts alone resist Christ's claims ? Shall they remain closed against Him ? Will you not acknowledge His universal dominion, and subject yourselves willingly and entirely to His law ? Will any other service but His bring you joy, contentment and peace ? Oh, rejoice in your Lord's ascension, and live in the joy of it. St. Paul says : ' Christ died for all : that they also, who live, may not now live to themselves, but unto Him Who died for them and rose again ' (2 Cor. v. 15). The good things of Christ's bounty are your portion now, to give you joy in His service ; and better things are in store for you, for your everlasting reward, in that kingdom to which Christ has ascended, and where He awaits you. How miserable are those men who walk in the ways of the world and of the flesh, and who do not raise their eyes and their heart to Heaven ! The Psalmist asks : ' O ye sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart ? Why do you love vanity, and seek after lying ?' (Ps. iv. 3).

Devout Christian, be wise in your aims and in your service. Listen to St. Paul, who says : ' Seek the things that are above : where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God ' (Col. iii. 1). Beseech your heavenly Mother, Mary, to obtain for you grace to resist all sinful attractions, and to moderate your affection for creatures and for all worldly joys. Happy are those servants of God who wish ever to know what things are pleasing to Him, and who strive to accomplish them.

May 28.

FAITH IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST—I.

I. The Divine mysteries of the Christian altar carry the mind back to the supper-room in which our Lord first consecrated the Holy Eucharist, and to Calvary, where our Lord was sacrificed. God had then come upon earth, and the earth was not destroyed or consumed by His awful Presence. God is offered everywhere in sacrifice now, and He enters into the Christian breast everywhere, and His Majesty does not confound us. Yet it is written: 'He looketh upon the earth, and maketh it tremble: He toucheth the mountains, and they smoke' (Ps. ciii. 32); and God said to Moses: 'Man shall not see Me, and live' (Exod. xxxiii. 20). The love and condescension of God in the mystery of the Incarnation have made possible what was otherwise impossible. God has clothed Himself with the flesh and blood of our humanity, and veiled under these He has sacrificed Himself; then to perpetuate the blessings flowing from so great a mystery, He has instituted the Holy Eucharist. In the Holy Eucharist, under the veils of bread and wine, there being only the appearance of these elements, and no bread or wine, He, true God and true man, gives Himself, with His Flesh and Blood, to be for a sacrifice and as a sacrament.

Devout Christian, never cease to admire the wonderful ways of God's love. Let it ever be your delight to contemplate these ways of love as seen in the Holy Eucharist. Do not ask incredulously: 'Where is Jesus Christ, your loving Saviour?' You know that He is in Heaven, and that no less really He is sacramentally present in the Holy Eucharist.

II. What, then, is the Holy Eucharist? We have only to listen to our Lord's words to find the answer to this

question. 'Take ye and eat: This is my Body. . . . Drink ye all of this. For this is My Blood' (St. Matt. xxvi. 26-28). In the Holy Eucharist is contained truly, really, and substantially, the Body and Blood of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and with them His Soul and Divinity. Our Lord Himself (St. John vi. 51-58) instructed the Jews concerning this mystery. He told them what it is, the necessity of receiving this heavenly food, and the effects it produces. What did He say it is? 'I am the living bread, which came down from Heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give, is My flesh for the life of the world.' But perhaps He is speaking figuratively? No; for He says: 'For My Flesh is meat indeed: and My Blood is drink indeed.' Must we receive this heavenly food? May we not disregard it? Our Lord answers these questions: 'Amen, amen, I say unto you: Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you.' Learn from our Divine Teacher, finally, the wonderful effects of the Holy Eucharist, and the reality of the union with Him which takes place in Holy Communion: 'He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. . . . He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me, and in I him. . . . He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me.'

Devout Christian, receive all these words with faith and submission. Meditate upon them in your heart. Treasure up the clear teaching they contain. Thank your loving Saviour for the Divine gift of faith in this heavenly mystery.

III. The Holy Eucharist has ever been the central object of worship and ritual in the Church, and the bond of union among the faithful. Could a more sublime token of communion in religion be conceived than the partaking in common of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ? To assist at the Divine mysteries and to refresh their souls at the heavenly Banquet, the early Christians even risked their lives. This spirit of devotion has been witnessed in every age of the Church in times of persecution.

See, too, the glorious evidences of faith in the Holy Eucharist in the magnificent cathedrals and churches with which the world is studded, coming down mostly from the ages of faith. Read the clear testimony to faith in this mystery found in the writings of so many saintly Doctors of the Church. Witness the daily ministry of priests offering the 'continual sacrifice,' exercised in every age; and the continual partaking of the Holy Eucharist by the faithful from the days of the Apostles. St. Paul speaks of the common practice of the faithful in his day, where he says: 'The chalice of benediction, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread, which we break, is it not the partaking of the Body of the Lord?' (1 Cor. x. 16).

Devout Christian, renew your faith in the reality of these mysteries. Rejoice that every age has witnessed such devotion to the Holy Eucharist. Lament the spiritual blindness of unbelievers in this Divine mystery. Pray to Mary, whom we style 'Our Lady of the Eucharist,' to obtain for you a lively faith in this mystery and in all its wonders, and a tender devotion to our Lord in the Sacrament of His love.

May 29.

FAITH IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST—II.

I. Christians mistrusting their own natural perception whether of the mind or of the senses, in presence of the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, follow a surer guide. They listen to the clear teaching of our Lord, and to the voice of His infallible Church divinely appointed to convey that teaching to the whole world; for our Lord said: 'Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature' (St. Mark xvi. 15). Christians, instructed by faith, believe in transubstantiation; they believe that, by the power of God and by the words of the priest uttered in the Holy Mass, the substance of the bread is changed into the substance of the Body of Christ, and the substance of the wine is changed into the substance of the Blood of Christ. The vulgar mind, unenlightened by faith, in presence of this mystery of Divine power, disbelieves and sometimes scoffs. Any system of philosophy that asserts the absolute impossibility of such a change is unchristian and false. In presence of the most certain fact of such a change having been effected by our Lord, and of its being really effected in the Mass, every argument used against transubstantiation is futile and false. The truth of Christianity itself stands or falls with the truth of this mystery. David says of God: 'He spoke, and they were made: He commanded, and they were created' (Ps. xxxii. 9); such was God's almighty power in creation. The Church says that by the same Divine power in the Holy Eucharist transubstantiation is effected.

Devout Christian, profess ever emphatically your faith in the Divine power that operates in the confection of the Holy Eucharist. In the Book of Wisdom we read that great power always belonged to God alone: 'Thou canst

do all things' (xi. 24); and our Lord said: 'With God all things are possible' (St. Matt. xix. 26). The same Divine power that created all things out of nothing can and does change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

II. The Holy Eucharist displays the wisdom of God in the conception of such an institution, and in the relations it establishes between God and men. In the institution itself we see how Christ, whole and entire, remains invisibly present under a visible Sacrament, and perpetuates His living Presence throughout all time; and we behold with unceasing admiration how this Divine Presence extends itself, so that countless numbers of the faithful spread over the globe may at the same time be consoled, refreshed, and strengthened by the same Sacrament, every one of them and all receiving, and being united to, Christ Himself. How intimate, sacred, and loving are, then, in the Holy Eucharist received by the faithful, the relations that exist between God and His people! How wonderful beyond all human conception it is that Christ our Lord should give for a daily sacrifice and for the food and nourishment of His followers His own Body and Blood, and that these should be really present under such simple forms, and even in the smallest quantities of the containing elements or species! The wisdom of God is displayed in all these wonders. 'He hath made a remembrance of His wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord: He hath given food to them that fear Him. He will be mindful for ever of His covenant: He will show forth to His people the power of His works' (Ps. cx. 4-6).

Devout Christian, admire the wisdom of God displayed in the Holy Eucharist. See what it has provided for your spiritual sustenance and consolation; even as though the whole thought of God was occupied about your sanctification and your welfare, at the cost of such condescension and humiliation on His part. Thank God for all the wise and tender ways of His providence displayed in the Holy Eucharist.

III. Christians worship in the Holy Eucharist not only

the Divine power that effects it, and the Divine wisdom that instituted it, and that perpetuates this mystery in the Church, but also the Divine goodness seen in its works. Through the Holy Eucharist we are able day by day to offer to God a sacrifice more acceptable than any ever offered by the patriarchs or high priests under the Old Dispensation—a sacrifice equal in value to the one great sacrifice offered on Calvary—even, as to the priest and victim, identical with that all-saving sacrifice. How unspeakably good it is on our Lord's part to place Himself again and again in our hands, to be thus offered to His Heavenly Father for all the ends of sacrifice! God foretold this by His prophet: 'From the rising of the sun even to the going down, My Name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My Name a clean oblation' (Mal. i. 11). How good of our Lord to enter the breasts of His followers to strengthen them with the heavenly nourishment of His own Body and Blood communicated to them in this Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist! How good of our Lord to dwell in the Blessed Sacrament in our tabernacles! to be with us as a constant Friend and Guest to comfort us in this land of our exile!

Devout Christian, proclaim often, and with many acts of faith and gratitude, your belief in the power, wisdom, and goodness displayed in the Holy Eucharist. Let the Holy Eucharist be your greatest treasure. Beseech Mary to teach you to love it as she loved it, and to reverence the Divine Presence therein even as she did. How happy you should be having before you this ever-living and incontestable proof of God's love of you!

May 30.

HOPE THROUGH THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

I. CHRIST has instituted this great Sacrament to be to us as a sign and token of our salvation. He would never have instituted it to give Himself to His followers if they were not to be with Him in eternal life. Miserable are those who receive our Lord in this life, and who through their perversity afterwards fall from grace and are lost. They are lost notwithstanding the immense saving grace given to them through the Holy Eucharist, and contrary to the loving designs of our Lord in instituting that Holy Sacrament. Of the Eucharist He said: 'He that eateth this Bread shall live for ever' (St. John vi. 59). There are, unhappily, other Christians by whom the Sacrament is received in vain besides those who fall away from grace—namely, those who receive it in mortal sin and without true repentance. St. Paul says: 'Whosoever shall eat this Bread or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the Body and of the Blood of the Lord. . . . For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord' (1 Cor. xi. 27, 29). Christians who 'hunger and thirst after justice' approach this heavenly Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist to receive the Author of grace, and to be strengthened and sanctified thereby; being assured with a firm faith and confidence of being saved thereby. It is to them a pledge of grace and of Divine aid and protection now, and of everlasting salvation hereafter.

Devout Christian, be comforted by our Lord's distinct promise of eternal life when you receive Holy Communion. You may have your faults and imperfections, but if no malice of mortal sin blights your hope, even these will not

keep you from finally realizing and enjoying the promised blessing of everlasting life.

II. All our comfort comes from the same source as our grace—namely, from the death of our Lord on the Cross. Whatever perpetuates the memory of this saving Sacrifice refreshes and perpetuates our comfort and our hope. At every Mass the holy sacrifice is renewed, and the Body and Blood of our Divine Saviour are both offered and partaken of; and St. Paul says: 'As often as you shall eat this Bread and drink the chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord until He come' (1 Cor. xi. 26). At every Mass you see not the High Priest Himself but His minister. The minister is there in all the humility of his personal lowliness, and faulty with his own faultiness, but yet with all the power given by Christ Himself of consecrating and of offering; and every Mass is an act of obedience to the command of our Saviour: 'Do this for a commemoration of Me' (St. Luke xxii. 19). Would our Lord have ordered this 'continual sacrifice' if He did not wish to confirm our hopes, and to comfort us continually with assurance of grace and salvation? Holy Church seeks to inspire us with this comfort in the words she puts on the lips of her priests at the Holy Mass: 'I will go in to the altar of God: to God Who giveth joy to my youth. . . . Hope in God, for I will still give praise to Him: the salvation of my countenance and my God' (Ps. xlii. 4, 6).

Devout Christian, when, having proved yourself (1 Cor. xi. 28), you receive Holy Communion devoutly, you partake of the Bread of eternal life. Be comforted and supported by a holy confidence of realizing the Divine promise that you shall live for ever. Let this confidence dispel undue fear, and fill you with spiritual joy.

III. Christians comforted through the Holy Eucharist with a lively hope of everlasting life, bear resignedly the time of their exile. They remember our Lord's comforting assurance: 'I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you' (St. John xvi. 22). The veils shall yet be lifted: in the next life the joy of the vision and possession of our Lord will reward us

for our present devotion. The partaking of the Holy Eucharist and the perpetual remembrance of Christ's sacrifice will console and reassure us while we are travelling to our destination. Before us are the two issues—eternal life and eternal death. The Holy Eucharist prepares us for the happy issue: 'He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath everlasting life' (St. John vi. 55). Under the stress of trials and difficulties, we may find support and relief in the Holy Eucharist, to preserve us from desponding; for our Lord says to us: 'Come to Me all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you' (St. Matt. xi. 28). The sense of our own feebleness and fickleness might discourage us, but in the Holy Eucharist we have One Who will strengthen us: 'Behold, I am with you all days' (St. Matt. xxviii. 20). 'Blessed is the man,' says David, 'whose help is from Thee' (Ps. lxxxiii. 6).

Devout Christian, be persuaded that our Lord in the Holy Eucharist will ever strengthen, support, and console you in this land of your exile; be further persuaded that He will bring you through the banquet of the Eucharist to the banquet of everlasting life. Beseech Mary to obtain for you great confidence in the effects of this Holy Sacrament, and a constant fervent devotion to the Holy Mass, and to whatever has relation to the Blessed Sacrament.

May 31.

LOVE OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

I. We speak of the Holy Eucharist as the Sacrament of our Lord's love. It was instituted on the eve of His sacred Passion; it was His last and richest gift to His disciples before He gave His life for them. The foregoing ceremonies and discourses upon the occasion of the Institution, and those that followed, breathed the tender love of His Sacred Heart for His disciples and for His Church. Are we responsive to His sentiments in our regard? Do we love the Holy Eucharist? Do we love and seek the Divine Presence and the Divine union? Our love must go out to our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. What would be the sentiments of the believing prophets and kings under the Old Dispensation if they had lived until these days of the Eucharist? Listen to David, who loved so devoutly the place of sacrifice and of worship in those far-off times. He says: 'I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house; and the place where Thy glory dwelleth' (Ps. xxv. 8). With what ardour would he not, in presence of the Eucharist, love the mysteries of the Christian altar? Was the mystery of our Lord's love in the Holy Eucharist present even dimly in David's mind when he prophesied: 'He hath given food to them that fear Him. He will be mindful for ever of His covenant' (Ps. cx. 5)?

Devout Christian, you should be for ever happy in possessing this gift; for what is it but Christ Himself? Cease not to treasure it, and to love it. Our Lord said: 'Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also' (St. Matt. vi. 21). Love the Holy Mass, in which Christ is offered to His Father in sacrifice; love the Holy Communion, in which Christ gives Himself to you; and love the Blessed Sacrament in which Christ abides with you.

II. Christians should love the Holy Eucharist because it is the special token of priceless value which Christ has given of His love. The prophet asks : ' What is the good thing of Him, and what is His beautiful thing, but the Corn of the elect, and Wine springing forth virgins ?' (Zach. ix. 17). The Eucharist is Christ's most excellent gift, richer than all other gifts, because it is Himself ; and this gift causes to bud and to blossom in Christian hearts the beautiful and fragrant flowers of purity and charity. The yearning of the devout soul for the comforting and satisfying delights of this Sacrament is expressed by David where he says : ' As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters : so my soul panteth after Thee, O God ' (Ps. xli. 2). In this Holy Sacrament is that Divine Lover of our souls, ' Who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own Blood ' (Apoc. i. 5) ; Who ' hath loved us and hath delivered Himself for us ' (Eph. v. 2) ; ' Who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope in grace ' (2 Thess. ii. 15). The thought of what our Lord is to us, and of all His goodness to us, should move our hearts to love, and should draw them to that Divine Sacrament instituted on the one hand to satisfy the loving desires of the Sacred Heart, and on the other to gratify the holy longings of Christians for union with Christ. Well, then, may the Holy Eucharist be called the Sacrament of Christ's love.

Devout Christian, regret any indifference of which you may at any time have been guilty in regard of the Holy Eucharist ; and pray now for grace to be ever drawn with sincere piety and affection towards this Divine Sacrament. Often turn your thoughts to Jesus, present in the Blessed Sacrament.

III. Christians in presence of the Blessed Sacrament may give expression to their piety in the words of St. Peter : ' Lord, it is good for us to be here ' (St. Matt. xvii. 4). They often experience special spiritual sweetness and contentment in Holy Communion, and before the Tabernacle. This is not surprising, if we think of all the blessings it is in Christ's power to bestow upon His friends.

Does He not seem to say to us in the Holy Eucharist: 'My delights are to be with the children of men' (Prov. viii. 31); and, 'Eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated' (Cant. v. 1)? Christians should also love this great Sacrament because it is the special bond of union among the faithful; as St. Paul says: 'For we, being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one Bread' (1 Cor. x. 17). These words leave us to understand the sad plight of those who do not partake of this 'one Bread'; they are outside of the mystic body of Christ of which the Apostle speaks. True Christians appreciate what the Holy Eucharist is to themselves and to the Church; through it they are united to Christ Himself, and through it they are bound together in Him in a sacred spiritual union; therefore do they love it.

Devout Christian, turn to this sublime Sacrament as to the sun of all mysteries, shedding its glorious light and comforting warmth within the Church from the time of the Last Supper until now, for the sanctification of souls, and for the strengthening and beatitude of the Church itself. Love with ever-increasing ardour what is so precious in itself, and so salutary to God's elect. Ask Mary to obtain this love for you, that your heart may be ever drawn to her Divine Son in this mystery of His everlasting love.

June 1.

OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY GHOST—I.

I. It should console and encourage us to bear in mind the wonderful dispensations of God for our salvation. The Divine Son had to assume our nature, and to suffer and die for us ; and the Holy Spirit had to be sent to comfort, sanctify, and perfect us by His operations and gifts, to befit us for our glorious destiny. Our Lord called the Holy Ghost the Paraclete, or Comforter, and He promised Him to the Apostles. Much did they need this Spirit to console them when our Lord had departed from them, to impart to them light and guidance in their difficult mission, and to fortify and encourage them in the face of the opposition and persecutions they had to contend with. The Holy Ghost came to abide with the Church for ever (St. John xiv. 16) ; to comfort not only the Apostles, but also all who should carry on their mission to the end of all time. He sustains the Church in her delicate and noble work in dealing with men and nations, and in all times of persecution and sorrow. The helps and consolations which religion affords us have for their Author the Holy Spirit of God, Who is our Comforter. In sorrow and suffering, when religion is absent, the case is doubly sad. The lights and strengthening graces of the Holy Spirit sustain the soul in the hour of affliction, and enable men to bear their trials with patience, and to draw precious spiritual fruits from them.

Devout Christian, do not depend upon men, nor upon the uncertain supports of nature, for support and comfort in the time of trial ; but pray to the Holy Ghost for the graces you need, and your prayer, if humble and confident, will be heard.

II. Our Lord called the Holy Ghost the Spirit of Truth.

We believe in the Catholic Church, not only because she is the Church of Christ built upon a rock (St. Matt. xvi. 18 ; xxviii. 20), with which He Himself will be 'even to the consummation of the world,' but also because, according to His promise, the Holy Ghost abides with her always, and teaches her all truth (St. John xiv. 17, 26 ; xvi. 13). If we had not this Divine guarantee of the truth of the Church and of her teaching, we should not feel ourselves bound to admit her authority to teach us ; and we should then find ourselves—what God never intended—exposed to uncertainty and error concerning truths vital to our everlasting salvation. Thanks be to God, we are happily, through the Church, instructed and guided in all truth and saving knowledge by the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth. It was this Spirit Who guided the holy writers of the Old and New Testaments, 'who spoke by the prophets,' and Who instructed the Apostles and preserved them from all error in their teaching. Through this same Divine Spirit Holy Church is preserved infallible in her teaching, and therefore we receive it with immense satisfaction as absolutely certain and true. The foundation of our faith and religion is not from yesterday ; but we are 'fellow-citizens with the Saints, and the domestics of God, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone' (Eph. ii. 19, 20).

Devout Christian, be thankful to God that your mind is not left in darkness or in uncertainty, but that, through the Holy Spirit speaking to you by the Church, it is comforted with the truth. Ever pray to this Divine Spirit for His most excellent gifts of understanding and knowledge, that you may walk in the light of His saving teaching.

III. The Holy Ghost confirmed the Apostles in their faith in our Lord and in all His Divine teaching. Our Lord said : 'He shall give testimony of Me.' The Holy Spirit gave this testimony by descending upon those whom our Lord had chosen to be His Apostles, and to whom He had committed the continuance of His work in the world. By His coming upon them, and bestowing upon them precious

gifts, the Divine Spirit associated Himself with them and with their Master, and, moreover, with their mission. He bestowed upon them, together with His seven gifts, the gift of tongues, and the power of working miracles. He gave unction to their preaching, and a spirit of joy in their hearts under their sufferings for the Gospel. He inspired them with suitable sentiments when arraigned before their persecutors, according to our Lord's promise: 'It shall be given you in that hour what to speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of My Father that speaketh in you' (St. Matt. x. 19, 20). Under the blessing of our Lord, and with the aid of the Holy Ghost, the Gospel spreads. Nations were converted to Christianity. In the cruel persecutions to which the Church was subjected, the faith and virtue of her children shone forth, and countless heroes won the martyr's crown.

Devout Christian, admire the works of the Divine Spirit. He works silently and secretly, but efficaciously. The operations of grace are His. Pray for strength and courage to practise and to endure what religion demands of you, and to follow the inspirations of the Holy Ghost leading you in the path of Christian perfection. Ask your heavenly Mother Mary to obtain for you in large measure the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and grace to pursue your vocation with fervour and fidelity.

June 2.

OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY GHOST—II.

I. We will consider the grace of spiritual regeneration, by which we are born as children of God. Our Lord called this being born again of water and the Holy Ghost (St. John iii. 5). In Baptism, through the Divine Spirit, we receive supernatural life. The loss of grace, sustained through the fall of our first parents, is repaired; and through Baptism we enter upon the holy way of a Christian life. The Holy Ghost infuses into our soul the all-necessary gifts of faith, hope, and charity, and it becomes His temple. This Divine Guest and His precious gifts bring upon us the complacent gaze of God, and His holy Angels; and we are made formidable to Satan and all the evil spirits. The fair creation that had been blighted by sin is now renewed in spiritual life and vigour, and the way is opened to its receiving Divine communications. We must respect in ourselves the sanctuary in which the Holy Ghost has enshrined Himself, and the spiritual adornments with which He has embellished our soul.

Devout Christian, view with admiration and thankfulness the operations of the Holy Ghost in the mystery of regeneration. Value in yourself the life of sanctifying grace, and seek ever to foster it by fidelity to Catholic principles, and by constancy in religious practices. Often say with devotion the prayer: 'Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful, and kindle in them the fire of Thy love.'

II. Another operation of the Holy Ghost is the work of our sanctification. He attracts us to what is good and pleasing to God; He cleanses us and heals the soul of its spiritual infirmities; He bears us along in the meritorious accomplishment of our duties; He sustains us under diffi-

culties and trials ; and He moves us to do works of religion and charity. Through all these and other operations of grace we become holy and advance in holiness. The Holy Ghost kindles in us, and blows into greater flame, the fire of Divine charity. His own indwelling in the soul sanctifies it. St. Paul says : ' No man can say, the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit. . . . But all these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as He will ' (1 Cor. xii. 3, 4, 11). In the Sequence of the Mass on Whit-Sunday we say : ' Our stubborn wills to Thine bend low, our cold hearts make with love to glow, our wandering feet control.' Many are the operations of grace, all tending to the important work of man's sanctification. The serious neglect of this work is one of the follies of our age. Advancement in social comfort, and in worldly standing, receives more consideration than the advancement of men's spiritual well-being.

Devout Christian, beg of the Holy Ghost the gifts of wisdom and counsel, that you may prudently pursue what is of the highest interest and benefit. St. Paul says : ' Be zealous for the better gifts ' (1 Cor. xii. 31). Seek to correspond readily and faithfully with the inspirations of grace, ever drawing you from evil, and leading you to what is good.

III. Our last reflection on this subject of the operations of the Holy Ghost shall be that He gives us a pledge of Divine adoption. Wherefore St. Paul calls Him ' the pledge of our inheritance ' (Eph. i. 14). Jesus Christ made us His brethren, and through Him we became the adopted children of God, and heirs of the heavenly kingdom. The Divine Spirit confirmed the whole work and mission of the Son, and by His grace He is ever assisting and furthering man's sanctification, endowing men with the gifts that shall make them worthy of their vocation and glorious destiny. St. Paul says : ' The Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God ; and if sons, heirs also : heirs indeed of God, and joint-heirs with Christ ' (Rom. viii. 16, 17). The Holy Ghost comforts

us, by the lights and spiritual blessings bestowed upon us, with the assurance of the Divine adoption, and with the hope and desire of the heavenly inheritance. What nobler or stronger inducement could we wish for to lead us to rise above everything that is wicked or unworthy, and to live in a manner becoming our high dignity of God's adopted children! Alas, that many men do not recognize the duties imposed upon them by the Divine adoption and heirship! Alas, that so many barter their heavenly inheritance for a mess of pottage, and, like Esau, make little account of having done so! (Gen. xxv. 34).

Devout Christian, invite the Holy Ghost to fix His dwelling in your soul, and strive never to offer opposition to the operations of His grace. Pray for the gifts of piety and the fear of the Lord, that you may love God's commandments, and dutifully avail yourself of the helps of religion, not confiding in your own weakness, but in the constant aid of grace. Beseech Mary, the Mother of Good Counsel, to obtain for you a wise discretion, and honourable bearing, in all your conduct.

June 3.

THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST.

I. The Holy Ghost came upon the Apostles and disciples of our Lord with exterior signs, and with interior spiritual gifts. St. Luke records the event in these words: 'Suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak' (Acts ii. 2-4). The Apostles needed this Divine Spirit, and the dark, unspiritual world needed Him, too. He inflamed the hearts of the Apostles with charity, courage, and zeal. He corrected and lifted up to better things depraved humanity. This glorious work was inaugurated on the Day of Pentecost. The Church was the visible instrument of this much-needed work. The Holy Ghost descended upon the Church to adorn it with heavenly gifts, to endow it with power and vitality, and to make it a fit and efficient instrument for fulfilling the grand mission confided to it. We are told that, in the days of creation, first of all 'the Spirit of God moved over the waters' (Gen. i. 2); when the spiritual renewal was to be effected in the world, the same Divine Spirit first descended on the Church, and the Apostles, moved, guided, and strengthened by Him, started out on their mission.

Devout Christian, submit yourself dutifully to Holy Church. Pray that her mission in your regard may be fully accomplished, and that you may participate in ample measure in the blessings and gifts of the Holy Ghost distributed in the Church, and through her.

II. The fruits of the coming of the Holy Ghost soon

manifested themselves in the world. The earth had become corrupted by reason of the absence of faith, grace, and religion. Without these things society anywhere, and in any age, must deteriorate and become corrupted. At the epoch of the Deluge, God decreed to punish man's wickedness by destroying him in the waters of the Flood; but when the Messias had come, God decreed for the wicked nations, not destruction, but mercy and salvation. 'Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit . . . and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth' (Ps. ciii. 30). God might have left men in their mental and moral degradation, but He decreed to open to them the way and means of conversion and salvation. The Holy Ghost, by the attractiveness and efficacy of His grace, and by the sanctifying power of His gifts, drew men from superstition and vice, and peopled the world with saints. Men who had loved luxury embraced the mortification of the Cross; and those who had set their hearts upon the distinctions, pomp, and riches of the world, embraced the practice of Christian poverty and humility. More than this, men and women of every condition of life manifested heroic courage in the service of God, even to the endurance of torments and death.

Devout Christian, admire the goodness of God in sending His Holy Spirit to lift up humanity. Admire, too, the fruits of the coming of the Holy Ghost. Pray that the same Divine Spirit may enable you to overcome every obstacle to your sanctification and salvation, and ever lead you by His efficacious graces 'to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus' (Phil. iii. 14).

III. Not by any inherent force of nature or character have men attained to sanctity, but by the efficacy of Divine grace. The working of the Holy Ghost in individual souls accounts for their progress in perfection. What edification we may derive from studying the lives of the Saints! The Church in every age has had its heroes, its children eminent for sanctity. There have been solitaries in the wilderness, and saintly ecclesiastics and laymen in the towns. There have been monks in their monasteries, and soldiers on the battle-field. There have been holy

missionaries in distant lands, and nuns in their convents, or labouring in the interest of charity in hospitals, schools, and orphanages. There are many forms of vocation ; and, as our Lord said : ' The Spirit breatheth where He will ' (St. John iii. 8) ; but what a glorious spectacle of holy work and holy lives the Church has ever presented to the gaze of the world ! Herein we witness the manifestation of the secret workings of the Holy Ghost in the world. He has not allowed the inspiring teaching of the Gospel to become a dead letter. St. Paul says that Christ ' gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works ' (Titus ii. 14). In the midst of corrupt nations the Holy Ghost has raised up Saints to be to our Lord fruits and trophies of His redemption.

Devout Christian, rejoice in the holy workings of the Divine Spirit, and say with David : ' Sing ye to the Lord a new canticle : let His praise be in the church of the Saints ' (Ps. cxlix. 1). Beseech Mary, the heavenly Protectress of the Church, to obtain for you the grace and happiness of being associated with the faithful children of the Church in works pleasing to God.

June 4.

THOUGHTS FOR WHITSUNTIDE—I.

I. Holy David asked: 'What is man that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that Thou visitest him?' (Ps. viii. 5). If these words applied especially to God's love in sending His beloved Son into the world to save us, they may also be applied to His love in sending His Holy Spirit upon His Church. The Angel Gabriel said to Mary: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee' (St. Luke i. 35). Our Lord said to His Apostles: 'You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you' (Acts i. 8). On both these occasions of the coming of the Holy Ghost there was an outpouring of the munificence of God, in view of man's salvation. What blessings, then, may we not expect, when this same Divine Spirit comes upon us in Baptism and Confirmation! and what graces will continue to flow upon the soul which is in the state of grace after receiving these sacraments, while therefore the Holy Spirit dwells in it! These graces are the spiritual wonders wrought in the faithful from the time of the Day of Pentecost, as foretold by the prophet Joel (ii. 28, 29): 'I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy: your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Moreover, upon My servants and handmaids in those days I will pour forth My Spirit' (Acts ii. 17, 18).

Devout Christian, rejoice because for all men these graces of the Divine Spirit are prepared. Reflect with a lively faith, and with devotion, on the events connected with the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles. Thank God for the comfort and other favours bestowed by Him on the Church.

II. Retirement and prayer were prescribed as a prepara-

tion for the coming of the Holy Ghost. We see, as a result of His coming, a spiritual enlightenment and understanding and an impulse for good, which were to be widespread and enduring. The disorder of sin and the disturbance of worldliness close the soul against these desirable and necessary spiritual fruits of the Spirit. If we would receive and enjoy the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, we must at least desire them, and prepare our heart for them. Because the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles with the sound of a great wind, we may regard this circumstance as a sign of the heavenly movements of the Divine Spirit in the souls of men, the results of which we see in the notable conversions that have been wrought, the noble deeds that have been done in the cause of religion and charity, and the uplifting of the standard of religiousness in the world. Because He came with parted tongues as it were of fire, we may see in this circumstance a token of the Divine charity which was to inflame men's hearts, of the bright light which was to chase away the darkness of superstition and unbelief, and of the heavenly knowledge which should ever enlighten and guide God's appointed teachers.

Devout Christian, contemplate with satisfaction and gratitude the invaluable blessings destined for men through the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Church. You are, happily, a partaker of them. Guard yourself against a worldly and dissipated mind, and against vanity and frivolity; for these things distract the soul and unfit it for heavenly gifts and graces.

III. The truths and lessons of the Gospel are our greatest treasure. It is the Holy Ghost Who helps us to understand and relish these teachings, and Who, as circumstances require, so often brings them to our mind for our guidance and consolation. Thus was it in the case of the Apostles, according to our Lord's promise, when He said: 'But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My Name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you' (St. John xiv. 26). Under the operation of

the Divine Spirit the truths of the Gospel bear fruit in our soul; for it needs heavenly grace to cause them to take root there, to grow and come to maturity, and to yield the intended fruit. This Spirit came upon chaos in the beginning, and produced all the wonders which we admire in nature; He came upon Mary that she might give to us our Divine Saviour; He came upon the Church to bless and give effect to its mission of salvation to the world; and He comes upon us to produce the fruits of grace in our soul. In the New Alliance this Divine Spirit endows the Church with sanctity and other essential characters, and brings in and establishes the Law of Grace.

Devout Christian, let it be your constant care to prepare your soul for the gifts and favours of the Holy Ghost. Alas, that so many men direct their minds so inordinately to only earthly gains and pleasures! Strive to avail yourself, as far as may be, of the exterior helps to devotion afforded by the Church in so many ways; as, by her seasons, her services, her sacraments, and the preaching of the Word. Beg of Mary, the brightest model of piety, to obtain for you a practical desire of leading a devout life, and a constant aspiration to the better things.

June 5.

THOUGHTS FOR WHITSUNTIDE—II.

I. The Holy Ghost descended upon the Church to abide with it (St. John xiv. 16); as it were, to permeate it in the whole extent of its expansion and of its existence, and by His precious gifts and graces to spread truth and godliness. Praised, then, for ever be the loving goodness of God, Who sent His Spirit to confer such blessings on men! From the Day of Pentecost Holy Church, like a bright sun shining upon mankind, began to give forth light and warmth—the light of Christian faith, and the warmth of Christian charity and piety. How much that bright sun was at that time needed in the world, which was spiritually dark and desolate! How much, too, it is needed still; for the saving light of our Lord's teaching is obscured by countless errors, and the salutary discipline of His holy law is disregarded amidst the disorders resulting from human perversity. Would that all men might turn to the light! Would that they might acknowledge the true grandeur of the Church in itself and in its mission! Just as the sun's majesty and brilliancy are unaffected by the clouds and mists that surround the earth and hide or dim its light, so, too, does Holy Church ever exist in its splendour and untainted sanctity unaffected by the errors and disorders of the world. St. Paul tells us that 'Christ is the Head of the Church,' which is subject to Him; and that He 'loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it: That He might sanctify it. . . . That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle' (Eph. v. 23-29).

Devout Christian, recognize the duty of belonging to the true Church with which the Holy Ghost abides, if you would be a partaker of His heavenly gifts. Pray that

the beneficial influence of the Church may be daily extended.

II. The Holy Ghost endows the Church with piety, leading it to uphold religion in the world. Through the Church the holy priesthood is perpetuated, and the sacred pastoral office, with its far-reaching influence for good, continues to be exercised. Through Holy Church the Sacraments are ever being administered to the living and to the dying, and there is daily offered to God on countless altars the one acceptable Sacrifice. The Church gathers into monasteries and convents the faithful of both sexes, who are called to aim at a more perfect life in the observance of the evangelical counsels. In these resorts of religious piety, and in the public churches, prayer and praise ascend to Heaven, to worship God and to honour His Saints. Holy Church fosters devotions of many kinds, and displays in many forms a splendid soul-stirring liturgy, to move the hearts of the faithful to sentiments of piety. All these helps to religion are accompanied by the preaching of the Word, to instruct and guide souls in the paths of dutifulness and virtue, and to lead them to aspire to the blessedness of the eternal hereafter in the kingdom of God. The souls of the departed are not forgotten; for solemn rites are performed over the dead, and prayers and sacrifices are offered in their behalf. Admirable, then, is the piety with which the Holy Ghost has endowed the Church!

Devout Christian, open your mind and heart to the pious instincts and affections with which the Church inspires its members, that these instincts and affections may be a protection against the withering influence of worldliness and irreligion. Love always the ways of piety.

III. In the midst of turmoil, disorder, and strife itself, the object of hatred, jealousy, and persecution, the Church pursues its mission unshaken and undisturbed in the world. The Divine Spirit preserves, aids, and protects it. Outside its fold, and refusing to submit to its Divinely given authority, are found men professing false religions or no religion, glorying in a false liberty, resenting restraint,

and strangers to self-denial; men losing all touch of the supernatural, minimizing religious obligations, loosening the wholesome bonds of constituted authority, and even disregarding the wise laws of Society. Whither are such men hastening? Will they build up and strengthen the welfare of the human race, or will they undermine and destroy it? The elements and aims of their policy are destructive. Oh that the Holy Spirit of God, working through the Church, might descend with attractive power upon all such men, and draw them by sincere conversion into the paths of truth and grace! In other men are seen superficial religion or hypocrisy. They are described by St. Paul as 'having an appearance indeed of godliness, but denying the power thereof' (2 Tim. iii. 5). The Holy Ghost condemns hypocrisy: 'True adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth' (St. John iv. 23). Oh that the light of truth and the spirit of true piety might penetrate the souls of such men and win them to sincere religiousness!

Devout Christian, deplore the blindness of so many men who close the door of their soul against the holy influence of the Church, and of the Divine Spirit Who abides with it, to bless and further its mission. Recognize your need of supernatural light and help, and pray daily for them. Ask Mary to obtain for you that, through the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit, you may, like the Church, remain firm and unshaken amidst the dangers of the world which surround you.

June 6.

VOICES OF THE EUCHARIST.

I. SILENCE surrounds the deep, sacred mystery of the Holy Eucharist; yet to devout souls animated with a lively faith there come many messages from the Heavenly Spouse and King Whose veiled Presence is there. They hear the silent voice that says: 'It is I, fear not' (St. Luke xxiv. 36). They are not afraid even though they reflect upon the Greatness and the Majesty of the Divine Christ Who is there. They hear the comforting and encouraging words: 'Now therefore, ye children, hear Me: Blessed are they that keep My ways. . . . Blessed is the man that heareth Me, and watcheth daily at My gates' (Prov. viii. 32, 34). They are invited to partake of the holy meats of rich graces purchased by Christ for His people: 'All you that thirst, come to the waters: and you that have no money, make haste, buy, and eat. . . . Hearken diligently to Me, and eat that which is good. . . . Incline your ear, and come to Me: hear, and your soul shall live' (Isa. lv. 1-3). Just as Samuel, when he heard the voice of God calling him in the temple where the ark of God was (1 Kings iii. 3), answered: 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth'; even so do pious Christians bid our Lord in the Holy Eucharist speak to their hearts and make them docile to His will.

Devout Christian, Christ in the Eucharist has many things to say to you. Listen to the voice from the Tabernacle that says to you: Turn aside to Me, pray before Me, console My Sacred Heart, and seek gifts at My hands. You will receive many blessings if you listen to that voice. Who would not wish to be the friend of the Divine Spouse present in the Holy Eucharist? Pray for the gift of earnest piety towards this mystery, and consider in what ways you may do honour to it.

II. Our Lord complained of the coldness and indifference of Jerusalem. He said: 'How often would I have gathered thy children as the bird doth her brood under her wings, and thou wouldst not?' (St. Luke xiii. 34). May He not complain of many of the children of the Church that they, too, disregard His loving invitations? Pious Christians hear these invitations proceeding from our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. He dwells therein, but He does not wish to dwell there alone. He seems to say: 'Here will I dwell for I have chosen it' (Ps. cxxxi. 14). Must it be now as in His sacred Passion? 'I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, but there was none: and for one that would comfort Me, and I found none' (Ps. lxviii. 21). To make amends for the indifference of so many to whom the love of our Lord in the Eucharist seems to appeal in vain, pious Christians snatch some moments of time to render their homage, their praise, and their love in presence of the Blessed Sacrament. They hear the silent Divine voice that says: 'My son, give Me thy heart' (Prov. xxiii. 26); 'Let thy heart receive My words' (Prov. iv. 4); and they wish to comply with the demands of their loving King. To whom can they better give their heart? To whose teaching would they rather give ear? What companionship could be more comforting or more beneficial? The spouse in the Canticles said: 'Draw me: we will run after Thee to the odour of Thy ointments' (Cant. i. 3). These pious souls are rewarded for their devotion by a similar attraction; their mind and heart are turned away from everything evil, and attracted to piety and virtue.

Devout Christian, our Lord in the Eucharist addresses you, asking for your love and faithful service. Listen to His voice saying to you: 'Put Me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm: for love is strong as death' (Cant. viii. 6). Pray for grace to cultivate in a practical and profitable way devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

III. From the Holy Eucharist comes the Divine voice, saying: 'I sleep, and My heart watcheth' (Cant. v. 2). As a faithful Spouse, our Lord in the Eucharist waits to

comfort us with tokens of His love and goodness. We may say with the spouse in the Canticles : ' I am become in His Presence as one finding peace ' (viii. 10). St. Paul tells us that He is ' Lord over all, rich unto all that call upon Him ' (Rom. x. 12). Our Lord's loving Heart speaks to us from the Eucharist, ' Come to Me,' as though saying : ' I know your infirmities, your labours, your burdens, your sorrows, and your sins ; but come to Me. I am in the Eucharist to heal your infirmities, to strengthen you in your labours, to relieve you of your burdens or to make them light, to console you in your sorrows, and to turn you from your sins. " I will refresh you." Come to Me and let heart speak to heart. " In the world you shall have distress ; but have confidence, I have overcome the world " ' (St. John xvi. 33). The many consoling voices that come to pious souls from the Eucharist fill them with courage and confidence, and brace them up to meet bravely the trials of this land of their exile. Those voices also give them sweet hope of coming before the unveiled Presence of their Heavenly Spouse and King in the Land of Vision. Praise, then, be for ever to Christ our Lord, Who dwells in the Eucharist to afford us so much consolation !

Devout Christian, our Lord speaks to you in the Holy Mass, wherein He repeats the sacrifice of Himself for your sake, reminding you of His love ; and in Holy Communion, telling you that He desires you to live ever in union with Him. He speaks to you from the Tabernacle, saying that He is ever with you. Ask Mary to obtain for you grace to listen attentively to the pleadings of His Sacred Heart, and to correspond more earnestly with His love.

June 7.

LESSONS OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

I. Although our Lord does not cease to live in the bosom of His Father under conditions of majesty and happiness altogether beyond our understanding, receiving there the unceasing homage of the Blessed in Heaven, yet He dwells, and continues to dwell, with us on earth in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. How glorious is the Guest, and how precious is the Treasure, abiding in the Holy Eucharist! Our Lord is that loving Spouse of the Church who says of Himself: 'I am the flower of the field, and the lily of the valleys' (Cant. ii. 1). He does not weary of abiding with us in this land of our earthly sojourn. This is the first lesson the Holy Eucharist teaches us. Our Lord in this Sacrament attaches Himself to us, and continues His operations among us, to teach us to attach ourselves to Him, and to convince us of how necessary He is to us. 'Learn of Me,' He says to us. There is something wanting in the lives of Christians who, however good they may otherwise be, have not faith in this mystery, or who neglect to receive our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. He is necessary to the happiness and perfection of the soul; this is a lesson He teaches us by this Divine institution, and by the continuance of the Holy Eucharist in the world during all ages.

Devout Christian, open your mind to receive the impression of this consoling truth. The Holy Eucharist is not to no purpose: it is to a very necessary and beneficial purpose, Divinely conceived and ordained. It will be fruitful in your soul in many mysterious ways, bringing your soul to holiness and peace, and to the message of happiness and perfection fixed in the Divine designs. Praise God for so great a benefit.

II. The Holy Eucharist teaches us, secondly, the lesson of Christ's everlasting love. If He abides always with us, it is because He continues to love us, and does not weary of loving us. He says to His Church, as to Israel of old: 'I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people. . . . Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love' (Jer. xxxi. 1, 3). In the Holy Eucharist He persists in displaying the marvellous earnestness of His Divine charity, although during all the centuries since its institution He has received countless insults, continued neglect, and heartless ingratitude. This picture of His love fills us with admiration, and teaches us the love we owe Him. Let the faithful come gratefully and devoutly to the holy sacrifice in which our Lord does not weary of offering Himself in their behalf to His Heavenly Father; let them come gratefully and lovingly to the Eucharistic Banquet in which He bestows Himself upon them for the heavenly nourishment of their souls; let them assemble in crowds to worship the Blessed Sacrament when solemnly exposed, and to receive the Benediction of this Sacrament; and let them visit the churches where our Lord dwells in the Tabernacle, that there they may speak heart to heart, and do homage to His love.

Devout Christian, do not weary of devotion to our Lord in the Holy Eucharist; do not cease to thank Him for His love. Be resolved by His grace never to separate yourself from Him by sin. Let it be your joy in life to cling to His holy service, and to seek to please Him in all your conduct.

III. Christians should ever strive to correspond with the Divine designs of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, and to yield themselves to the spirit of fervent piety it inculcates. Thirdly, then, the Holy Eucharist teaches us piety. Our Lord therein would gather the sheep of His fold around Him; therein He would receive their loving homage, and even many exterior tokens of their reverence and devotion. In return He imparts many spiritual blessings. David said: 'Man shall come to a deep Heart' (Ps. lxiii. 7). Our Lord from the Holy Eucharist says to

all : ' Come to Me.' Christians who realize how comforting and how fruitful in grace devotion to this mystery is may say, in the words of the Canticles : ' I sat down under His shadow Whom I desired : and His fruit was sweet to my palate ' (Cant. ii. 3). The Sacred Heart in the Eucharist is an unfathomable well of love and bounty, drawing the souls of Its worshippers in the ways of piety, enlightening them with spiritual knowledge, and consoling them with spiritual gifts. And these worshippers comforted, strengthened, and purified by these blessings, may say with David : ' Who is God but our God ? God Who hath girt me with strength ; and made my way blameless ' (Ps. xvii. 32, 33).

Devout Christian, study these lessons in the school of the Eucharist, that you may advance in knowledge and in piety. Ask Mary to obtain for you grace to persevere in your love of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, and to imitate the Saints in devotion to this mystery of goodness and love.

June 8.

THOUGHTS ON THE EUCHARIST.

I. When our Lord was about to leave His Apostles, knowing the trial this would be to them, He strove to comfort them, saying: 'I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you' (St. John xiv. 18). His followers cannot deem themselves orphans while the mystery of the Holy Eucharist remains in the Church. They would, indeed, be orphans if the Eucharist was not what the Catholic Church teaches it to be—namely, the Sacrament of Christ's real Presence. The Old Dispensation of figurative rites has been succeeded by the realities they foreshadowed. The chosen lamb of the flock anciently offered to God by priests of the order of Aaron has been succeeded by the true Lamb of God, Christ Himself, offered to God by priests of the order of the Christian priesthood. The mystery of the Last Supper is repeated. Before our Lord had then given the Blessed Sacrament to His Apostles, He declared concerning what He held in His sacred hands: 'This is My Body.' We rightly believe what the Catholic Church teaches, and has always taught—namely, that in Holy Communion there is a true and substantial reception of Christ's very Body, and not a mere spiritual partaking. The words 'I will come to you' are verified; for Christ Himself through His ministers gives Himself to the faithful in Holy Communion, just as He truly offers Himself through them in the Holy Mass.

Devout Christian, rejoice in the riches and blessings of the New Dispensation, and take comfort from the graces imparted to the Church through the mystery of the Holy Eucharist.

II. In the Holy Eucharist something more is imparted than the spiritual gift of grace. The soul disposed for

Holy Communion has already this spiritual gift. When our Lord said, 'If anyone love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him' (St. John xiv. 23), He spoke of His spiritual visitation and dwelling. He spoke of quite a different matter when He said: 'My Flesh is meat indeed: and My Blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me, and I in him' (St. John vi. 56, 57). We must, then, believe with the Catholic Church that the Holy Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ's very Body and Blood offered in sacrifice in the Holy Mass, and bestowed upon the faithful in Holy Communion. There is nothing figurative therein, but the very reality of Christ's Presence; and this truth is further conveyed by our Lord's words: 'He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me.' Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist does more than lift us up to His Divine embraces as He did the little children, or allow us to repose our head upon His breast as He permitted St. John to do. His love goes further, for He gives Himself to us for the nourishing and strengthening of our soul.

Devout Christian, pray for a lucid and lively faith in these ways of Divine Love displayed in the Holy Eucharist. Strive to live ever piously, so as to be ever ready to approach this Divine Sacrament in which Christ becomes the Guest of your soul.

III. If the figurative rites of the Old Dispensation were a preparation for the Divine reality displayed in the Holy Eucharist, we may also attribute to this mystery of the New Law the special office of preparing the faithful for the possession and enjoyment of Christ without shadow or veil in the heavenly Paradise. The passing union effected now with Christ through the Eucharist shall then be exchanged for the everlasting union with Him in His Kingdom, the former being suitable to our present existence in labour and sorrow, and the latter to our future condition in everlasting repose and bliss. This happy realization of eternal union with Christ seems promised by our Lord when He said: 'With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with

you before I suffer. For I say to you, that from this time I will not eat of it, till it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God' (St. Luke xxii. 15, 16). In the Eucharistic banquet, besides enjoying a communication of Divine blessings in mysterious ways, the faithful also experience a foretaste of heavenly realities, hidden now under the veils of these mysteries. Poor, weak, and unhappy are the souls of Christians who have no relish for these mysteries, and who abstain from this Divine banquet.

Devout Christian, conceive an exalted idea of this most excellent Sacrament, which is as an ever-flowing fountain in the Church. Beseech Mary to obtain for you the grace of fervour in receiving Holy Communion, that you may gather rich fruits of grace, piety, and virtue through this Sacrament, and thus make preparation for the life of glory to come.

June 9.

MYSTERY OF THE EUCHARIST.

I. The Holy Eucharist is shrouded with mysteries, and men who have not the faith of Catholics would denude it of all its realities to bring it from the high level of a Divine marvel to the lower level of a mere sign or symbol. When confronted with the true teaching as to what it really is, they will not believe ; they say with the unbelieving Jews : 'This saying is hard, and who can hear it ?' (St. John vi. 61). With what religious earnestness, therefore, should not true Christians, in face of this unbelief, profess their faith in all the realities of this Divine Sacrament ! With St. Peter they should say to our Lord : 'Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life' (St. John vi. 69). If the Holy Eucharist is not what the Catholic Church has always declared it to be, then there is nothing wonderful in it ; then it is no longer a Divine mystery, displaying the wonders of Christ's power, wisdom, goodness, and condescension, but a simple rite of little importance. Yet, see what a place it has ever held in the faith and piety of Catholics in every age since its institution ! And this mystery of Christ's love stares us in the face every day. 'In every place there is sacrifice' (Mal. i. 11), and every day our Lord enters into the hearts of many of the faithful throughout the world, while also He ever abides in the Tabernacle hidden under the veils of the Eucharist.

Devout Christian, pray for a lively faith in this Divine mystery. When you uphold belief in the realities of the Eucharist, you uphold the honour of our Lord, Who said : 'The bread that I will give is My Flesh for the life of the world.'

II. In presence of the Eucharist unbelievers say : 'How

can this possibly be ?' Do they forget what St. Paul says of the Incarnation ? He teaches that in becoming man our Lord ' emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant,' and ' humbled Himself ' (Phil. ii. 7, 8). This, too, is what our Lord does when, under the appearances of bread and wine, He becomes our Guest, uniting Himself to us, and us to Himself, and nourishing our souls. Our Lord did not take us into His counsels when He instituted this mystery, which surpasses all the thought of man. It was His to conceive and design, and to execute, and to teach us what He has done in His love of us ; and it is ours to believe and to avail ourselves dutifully and gratefully of His Divine Providence for us in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is surrounded with mysteries, but it is sufficiently revealed to us by our Lord's teaching, and to this we must fully and constantly adhere. How far short of the true idea of our Saviour's love do those persons fall who deny the reality of His Divine Presence in the Eucharist ! The unbelief and hardness of heart of His people do not cause Him to withdraw His gift ; for ' He hath made a decree, and it shall not pass away ' (Ps. cxlviii. 6). Let all the faithful continue ever to praise Him for this most marvellous providence. ' Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to Him : and His wonderful works to the children of men. For He hath satisfied the empty soul, and hath filled the hungry soul with good things ' (Ps. cvi. 8, 9).

Devout Christian, let your indebtedness to our Lord for this mystery of Divine love bind you ever to fervour in His service. Let not the Blessed Sacrament be to you as a book unread, or as a page of God's revelation that you have not opened ; let it be to you as a lucid firmament shining upon your path, leading you in the knowledge of Christ's unspeakable love.

III. In the Holy Mass the Eucharist is declared to be the ' Mystery of Faith.' Divine teaching reveals this mystery, but shall our faith in it be so dull that only after death we shall recognize that all the while of our life on earth Jesus, Who is in the glory of the Father, was also really with us in the Holy Eucharist ? Let us not be among those who

do not discern with a firm, lively, and practical faith the Body of the Lord (1 Cor. xi. 29). Many secrets of Nature are still unknown to us, but there is no uncertainty here. The clear teaching of revelation lifts the veil and discovers to us in all the certainty of their reality the presence of Christ's adorable Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. What virtue will not flow from them into our soul when we partake of this admirable Sacrament! If St. Paul asks how may we 'in all things grow up in Him Who is the Head, even Christ?' (Eph. iv. 15), may we not answer that the most potent means of doing this is frequent Communion? Frequent devout Communion was the secret of the sanctity of the greatest Saints. On the other hand, neglect of Communion has been noticed in the lives of bad Catholics. Their souls became weak, yet Food was at hand; they became cold, yet there was the Fire; they thirsted, yet the Eucharist, the Fountain of Living Water, was at hand. To them the great mystery remained a mystery, and their souls were left a prey to their spiritual enemies and to their own perversity.

Devout Christian, think often of Christ's unspeakable love in the mystery of the Eucharist, and of all the Eucharist should be to you. Beseech Mary to obtain for you an undying devotion to our Lord in this mystery, that by frequenting Holy Communion you may experience the Divine aids it imparts, live ever in grace, and prepare your soul for its blessed destiny hereafter.

June 10.

CONSOLATIONS OF THE EUCHARIST

I. The Holy Eucharist has ever been a source of solid consolation to Christians. At the sacred Banquet have the faithful ever gathered to satisfy a longing which only the Holy Eucharist can gratify. This pious eagerness reminds us of our Lord's words : ' Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together ' (St. Matt. xxiv. 28). If men find consolation in the company of those whom they love, Christians should experience an unspeakable comfort in being near our Lord, in addressing themselves to Him, and in being admitted to receive Him in the Holy Eucharist. The abiding presence of our Lord in this Sacrament must have some special meaning ; it must convey to us some more than ordinary message—a message, too, it is always delivering. When we consider our unworthiness, our faultiness, our miseries, and our lowliness, what consolation is not afforded us by the thought that our Lord loves us even to the extent of abiding with us and of inviting us to union with Him in the Holy Eucharist ! Encouraged by His invitations, we may say : ' I will seek Him Whom my soul loveth ' (Cant. iii. 2). He has endured for us the sorrows of the Passion and the pangs of death on the Cross, and now He looks for the yearnings of our heart and faithfulness in our service of Him, that in the Holy Eucharist He may in return give us to taste the sweetness of devotion (1 St. Peter ii. 3).

Devout Christian, ever cultivate devotion to the Holy Eucharist, and partake frequently and fervently of that refreshing Sacrament, that our Lord may fill your soul with His consolations and grant you to relish the sweetness of His Presence.

II. The sources of consolation in the Eucharist are prac-

tically the graces it imparts. In life we experience labours, anxieties, sorrows, and temptations, and we are ever engaged in contest with our evil inclinations. Whatever can afford us relief from our miseries or make palatable the bitterness of our trials should be welcomed as a consoling boon. The graces of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist are especially efficacious for these purposes. Through the influx and increase of charity resulting from the devout reception of the Eucharist our soul is cleansed from venial sins, and made strong to resist sin, and it is led to desire vehemently the things that are pleasing to God. Refreshed and consoled by this Sacrament, it turns from all unholy satisfactions, and it seeks to overcome all opposition to those dispensations of Providence that constitute the trials of life. Through the actual graces resulting from the Eucharist the spiritual life of the soul is preserved, fresh vigour is imparted, the heat of evil passions is subdued, and the Christian virtues are more loved. All this yields solid consolation. All this manifests the marvellous efficacy of the Eucharist.

Devout Christian, you will be consoled in your way through life if you approach Holy Communion frequently and fervently. Be not among those who value only human and worldly satisfactions, and who do not heed spiritual consolations, although these are truer and more durable. In Holy Communion it is our Lord Himself Who comforts and refreshes the soul. Say to Him with David: 'My heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation: I will sing to the Lord, Who giveth me good things' (Ps. xii. 6).

III. The Holy Eucharist is the source of consolation to the soul by reason of the assurance it affords both of present protection and support and of future happiness. Christ in the Eucharist seems to say to the Christian soul: 'It is I, fear not'; and it feels comfort and confidence. St. Paul bids us, for our spiritual protection, put on the 'armour of God.' What is more truly the armour of the soul than the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist? The soul, nourished with the Body and Blood of Christ, may say: 'The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall

I fear ? The Lord is the protector of my life : of whom shall I be afraid ?' (Ps. xxvi. 1). This Sacrament imparts strength and inspires confidence. Our Lord will not abandon to the power of its enemies the soul that clings to Him. This soul may also say : ' I believe to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living ' (Ps. xxvi. 13) ; for the Holy Eucharist is to us a pledge of salvation. Our Lord's promise is : ' He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, hath everlasting life : and I will raise him up in the last day ' (St. John vi. 55). Living under the assurances this Sacrament gives them, Christians should be ever consoled, and should ever enjoy interior peace. Through the Eucharist they are protected and sustained now, and through it they are also filled with confidence for the future life.

Devout Christian, what is of greater importance to you than to receive Holy Communion devoutly and frequently ? Let not worldly cares or pleasures come between you and Holy Communion to keep you back from it. Pray to Mary to obtain for you a sincere and constant relish for this most excellent of all the Sacraments, and the grace of experiencing the spiritual consolations it imparts.

June 11.

CHRIST IN THE EUCHARIST.

I. When we reflect upon Christ's words, 'Take ye, and eat: This is My Body' (St. Matt. xxvi. 26), we recognize that in the Holy Eucharist we receive more than food prepared by human hands; for our Lord declares that in this mystery He is the Living Bread come down from Heaven, and that what is therein contained and received is verily His own Flesh and Blood. In this Divine Sacrament, then, Christ is heavenly food to nourish the soul, and to preserve it in grace. The soul of man is made after God's image and likeness (Wis. ii. 23), and in the supernatural order it is so exalted that St. Peter teaches we are 'made partakers of the Divine nature' (2 St. Pet. i. 4). In what way, and wherewith, shall its supernatural life be nourished and maintained that it may continue to enjoy this participation? The means of doing so is, in the New Dispensation, the Divine Eucharist. Christ in the Eucharist has become the Bread for the soul's nourishment. How exalted, then, must be the dignity of the human soul! We note that in the Eucharist the exterior sign is that of food, and it signifies that this Sacrament nourishes the soul and renews its wasted forces. Praised and thanked be for ever Christ our Lord, Who accommodates Himself in this Sacrament to our soul's present condition and necessities, even to the extent of becoming the soul's spiritual refection.

Devout Christian, ever receive Holy Communion with a lively faith and with great reverence, remembering the surpassing greatness of our Lord, Who therein gives Himself to you, and at the same time with great fervour and confidence, because of the wonderful love He therein manifests for you.

II. Christ our Lord becomes in the Eucharist the Treasure of devout souls. With pious devotedness they visit the Blessed Sacrament and receive Holy Communion as circumstances permit of their doing so. Our Lord in the Eucharist is as a magnet drawing them to Himself. They speak to Him therein as if they actually beheld Him. Their devotion grows until they come to feel that the earth without our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament would be a dreary waste. They become as doves fluttering around the tabernacle wherein is concealed their Treasure, the Beloved above all, 'chosen out of thousands' (Cant. v. 10). They delight in all the solemnities in which the Blessed Sacrament is especially honoured. The day on which they receive Holy Communion is one of holy festivity. They make frequent acts of spiritual Communion, and they find pleasure in reading books or in hearing sermons that treat of this mystery of Christ's love. Our Lord rewards this edifying devotedness by conferring upon these Christians special graces to confirm them in innocence of life and in piety. They are highly esteemed by the priests who direct them, and they diffuse around the good odour of Jesus Christ.

Devout Christian, where is your Treasure? Who should be so dear to you as Christ, Who dwells for your sake upon our Altars? Say to Him in the words of David: 'What have I in Heaven? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? For Thee my flesh and my heart hath fainted away: Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever' (Ps. lxxii. 25, 26).

III. St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: 'Christ, our pasch, is sacrificed' (1 Cor. v. 7). In the Eucharist Christ is ever a victim offered to His Heavenly Father to do Him homage, to satisfy for the sins of men, and to win for men mercy and every spiritual grace. The Prophet foretold: 'In every place' (not on Calvary only) 'there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My Name a clean oblation' (Mal. i. 11); and he declared that this sacrifice should be, not among the Jews, but among the Gentiles, and that it should continue to be offered 'from the rising of the sun

even to the going down.' Christ our Lord does not weary of offering Himself as a clean and acceptable victim on our behalf in the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass. Through Him thus offered countless blessings flow upon the Church. Let all Christians gather before the Altar in every part of the globe ; let their prayers for the four great ends of sacrifice go up to Heaven while the Divine Victim repeats His one all-sufficient offering of Himself. All other offerings fall short of what God demands, but in the Holy Mass Christ is the acceptable victim. Alas ! that faith and piety are often wanting to Christians ; for many neglect to assist at Mass as often as they might do, and even as often as they are strictly bound to do.

Devout Christian, ever worship and love Christ as a constant victim offered to His Father on your behalf in the Holy Eucharist. Admire the unspeakable goodness displayed by Him in the sacred mysteries of the Altar. Love the Holy Mass. Pray to Mary, who witnessed the all-saving Sacrifice of her Son on Calvary, to obtain for you special devotion to Him in the Holy Eucharist, that therefrom you may reap abundant fruits of sanctification.

June 12.

INDIFFERENCE TOWARDS THE EUCHARIST.

I. The Holy Eucharist teaches us how far-reaching, how full, and how constant is Christ's love of His followers. Is it possible that so much love is not understood and not appreciated? It is, alas! sad to see it meet with ingratitude and indifference. All hearts should be aglow with charity in presence of this mystery of Divine love and condescension; but this is not the case. What is spiritual and divine is not always in favour, for many men love rather what may be termed 'worldly' or 'bodily' goods and satisfactions. A consequence of this misdirection or perversion of their will and affection is a clouding of the mind: the beauty and majesty of truth are obscured, and the value and usefulness of spiritual blessings are not realized. St. Paul says: 'The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God' (1 Cor. ii. 14). In the case of the Eucharist our faith must stand not 'on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God' (1 Cor. ii. 5). Indifference towards this Divine institution and source of spiritual strength and consolation arises in the first place from a want of faith, and in the second place from a want of piety.

Devout Christian, beware of indifference towards that Divine mystery which is the centre of worship and piety in the Church; beware of ingratitude for so wonderful and comforting a blessing. Be not of the number of those Christians who neglect hearing Mass, who never assist at Holy Benediction, and who seldom receive Holy Communion. Can it be said that such as these correspond as they should with the love of the Sacred Heart displayed in the Holy Eucharist?

II. The absence of a lively faith explains in part indif-

ference towards the Holy Eucharist. There is a physical obstacle to faith in this mystery, because the eye of the body cannot penetrate it and see beneath the veils. Our senses tell us that there is something visibly present and point out where ; but otherwise they offer no help towards discerning what faith teaches, they would even persuade us that there are before us only bread and wine, whereas in reality under those appearances there are before us the very Body and Blood of Christ. There is also an intellectual obstacle to faith in this mystery, because the mind cannot comprehend all that is demanded by what faith teaches us concerning it. The mind cannot comprehend how, under the simple elements or species of the Eucharist, and even in the least particle thereof, Christ Himself, true God and true Man, is really, substantially, and wholly present, as truly so, and the same, as He is present in Heaven ; how He is just as truly present in every sacred Host in every church in every part of the world, and how He gives Himself wholly to every communicant. Notwithstanding the helps offered to the mind by the systems of philosophy of the most learned Christian philosophers, the intellectual difficulty remains, and only faith can reconcile the mind to the absolute truth of the mystery. Where this faith is weak, or where it is not fostered, or again, where it is not lively, there will be indifference.

Devout Christian, join yourself to those sincere believers to whom faith in the Holy Eucharist brings joy and consolation, and who manifest it by an edifying devotion. Pray for a lively and practical faith in this mystery.

III. There is indifference towards the Holy Eucharist even in many Christians who have a lively faith in this mystery, and it is owing to a want of piety. In the second place, then, we must reckon the absence of piety as explaining such indifference. St. Paul says : 'They that are according to the flesh mind the things that are of the flesh ; but they that are according to the spirit, mind the things that are of the spirit' (Rom. viii. 5). When the minds of Christians are engrossed with excessive care for worldly position, social pleasures, vanities, commercial

enterprise, scientific research, and riches, these things divert them from things spiritual. Self-indulgence and too much worldliness take away relish for spiritual duties, and weaken piety. Consequent upon this lessening of piety will be indifference towards the Holy Eucharist, for piety comes only second to faith as a necessary disposition for practical devotion towards this mystery. It is to be feared that where there exists indifference towards this mystery of Christ's love, indifference will also spread towards other spiritual blessings, and create a condition of spiritual apathy. Alas ! that there should be apathy where by right there should be constant and increasing fervour !

Devout Christian, beware of falling from piety in what concerns your relations towards this mystery of the Eucharist. Let no worldly interests draw you away from devotion to the Eucharist which is as a spiritual furnace keeping alive fervour and love of religion. Pray to Mary to obtain for you a sincere and lasting attraction towards our Lord in the Eucharist that you may ever rise superior to the exorbitant demands of the world and society, which would wish to leave you no time for prayer and spiritual duties.

June 13.

PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

I. CHRISTIANS are invited to receive Holy Communion every day. That they may enjoy so great a happiness they must put away all obstacles to so desirable a blessing, and they must dispose themselves becomingly. St. Paul says : ' Whosoever shall eat this Bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and of the Blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of the chalice ' (1 Cor. xi. 27, 28). Mortal sin, and what is tantamount to it—namely, the absence of a firm purpose to avoid mortal sin—are the obstacles to Holy Communion. But in preparing to receive so excellent a sacrament in which Christ Himself is received, Christians should endeavour to excite themselves to piety, and they should form a good intention. Let it be said, then, that a sufficient preparation would be freedom from mortal sin and a firm resolve of not falling again into sin ; but that to make the preparation more perfect, Christians should be moved to receive Communion by a desire to please God, and to be more closely united to Him in the bonds of charity, and by a desire also of finding in this Holy Sacrament a remedy for their spiritual infirmities and defects.

Devout Christian, pray for the grace to be animated with a fervent desire of Holy Communion, and examine if you receive this Holy Sacrament as often as your circumstances allow. Be resolved to make always a becoming preparation. Remember that a lengthy preparation is not required, but fervent dispositions.

II. With what holy desire should not Christians approach Holy Communion and even frequent the Sacred Banquet when they reflect upon the blessings it yields ! The fre-

quent and, where possible, daily reception of this Sacrament fosters union with Christ, it sustains and strengthens spiritual life, and it is a means of bringing the soul to everlasting happiness, for this Sacrament is even a pledge of eternal life. Who will not, therefore, hasten to partake of a sacrament that brings the soul such incomparable blessings? Our Lord does not bid us stay away, but He most vehemently invites us, and presses us with all the love of His Sacred Heart to approach it: 'Come, eat My Bread, and drink the Wine which I have mingled for you' (Prov. ix. 5). 'Do not stay away for, behold, it is I your Lord Who invite you. I send My priests to you with the order: "Compel them to come in, that My house may be filled" (St. Luke xiv. 23). I know your weaknesses and your sins; come to Me that I may strengthen you with Divine nourishment; come to Me that I may bind up your wounds and heal you.' Only desire this union, only desire to love God more than you do. Christians should respond to this loving and pressing invitation. Alas! too many pretend that they have not time to prepare for Holy Communion, and many do not give it a thought. Their desires are in a different direction.

Devout Christian, thank your loving Saviour for His pressing invitation. Do not neglect to comply with it. Ask for grace to love Holy Communion and to prepare devoutly for it. Say, with David: 'As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters: so my soul panteth after Thee, O God' (Ps. xli. 2).

III. Holy Church, in our Lord's Name, invites sinners to arise from their sins and to change their lives that they, too, may come to receive Holy Communion frequently. They will find the Holy Eucharist an effectual remedy for their disorders. It will instil into their hearts a desire of leading a good life, and it will give them an attraction for piety. In the case of sinners, as a preparation for Communion, they must confess their sins with sincere sorrow and with a firm purpose of amendment of life. Let them, then, upon their conversion, receive the Holy Eucharist frequently and fervently; because their disorders have been serious,

the Divine Physician should visit them again and again. In the case of Christians who have been careless and tepid in God's service, there should be a practical desire to be more dutiful. In order to be restored to fervour and that their fervour may be fostered and increased, they should go frequently to the Eucharistic Banquet, as to a furnace of Divine charity. The conduct of some neglectful Christians suggests the belief that they do not rely sufficiently upon the efficacy of grace, but consider that their amendment should be altogether their own work. Such Christians should listen humbly and trustfully to our Lord's words : ' Without Me you can do nothing.'

Devout Christian, if you would maintain fervour and constancy in God's love and service, receive Holy Communion frequently and with a pious relish. Remember that the Holy Eucharist is the ever-flowing channel of rich graces. Mary is called the ' Singular vessel of devotion ': turn with reverence and love to her, to beseech her through her loving intercession to obtain for you the grace to prepare yourself always with devotion for Holy Communion. Let it be your practice to recommend yourself to her prayers before every Communion.

June 14.

EXCELLENCE OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

I. When we come to consider the excellence of the Divine Eucharist we see that it rests upon so many grounds, that the mind is overwhelmed by their number and weight. Its excellence shines forth when we reflect that it contains the Author of grace Himself, and that it bestows Him upon the devout communicant so that he may be even united to his Lord and God. It contains the very Body and Blood of Christ, and these are offered to God in the sublimest of all sacrifices, in which Christ is Himself both Priest and Victim. The Holy Eucharist is, moreover, the complement of all the other Sacraments, and is distinguished among them by the special richness and efficacy of its fruits in the soul. The excellence of the Eucharist is further demonstrated by the number and excellence of the figures which foreshadowed it. We are not, therefore, surprised when Pope Clement V., who flourished early in the fourteenth century, declares it to be a most sublime, excellent, and precious Sacrament; one to be adored, venerated, worshipped, glorified, and honoured with our whole devotion, and to be magnified with the highest praises; a most noble memorial, he says, to be commended to our inmost feelings, to be bound firmly to the mind, and to be laid up in the bosom of the heart, in meditation and in unceasing devout celebration.

Devout Christian, with what fervour and piety of mind and heart do you worship our Lord in the Holy Eucharist? Admire the exceeding excellence of this Sacrament. How stupendous is the mystery of the Holy Mass! How adorable the Divine Presence beneath the Eucharistic veils! Ever praise God for the gift of the Eucharist, and for all the blessings it bestows.

II. St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that the Holy Sacraments of the Church are ordained to two ends—namely, as remedies for sin, and as helps to Divine worship. Wherein, we may ask, do we see the excellence of the Eucharist in relation to Divine worship? The holy Doctor answers our inquiry. Although, he says, baptism has a certain excellence, inasmuch as it is the beginning of the spiritual life, being, as it were, the door to the other Sacraments, since it confers upon the baptized person power to receive the rest; and again, although the Sacrament of Holy Orders has also a special kind of excellence, since it fits priests to administer Sacraments to others—yet, he says, the Holy Eucharist holds the highest place of all among the Sacraments. And why? Because, says the holy Doctor, it surpasses in excellence all the rest in the character of the very act itself in which it consists, for being the great, solemn, and only sacrifice of the Church, in it consists chiefly and especially Divine worship; indeed, the act in which it consists is the highest possible act of Divine worship. If, as St. Thomas points out, baptism is the beginning of the spiritual life and the door leading to the other Sacraments, the Eucharist is, he declares, the consummation or perfection of the spiritual life and the end of all the Sacraments, because by the sanctifying effects of all the rest a preparation is made either for the consecrating of the Holy Eucharist or for receiving it. In this, too, is seen its superior excellence.

Devout Christian, be happy to learn from the angelic Doctor reasons for acknowledging the excellence of the Eucharist, and dwell upon them with spiritual satisfaction.

III. If, as St. Thomas teaches, the Sacraments of the Church are ordained for succouring man in his spiritual life, this is especially so with regard to the Eucharist, and herein is seen its excellence. Inasmuch, the holy Doctor says, as corporal things bear a likeness to things spiritual, so, too, is there a certain resemblance between the spiritual life and the corporal life. Three things are necessary to corporal life—namely, generation, by which man receives life; growth, by which he is helped to attain the perfection

of life; and food, by which life is preserved. St. Thomas says that, in like manner, for the spiritual life Baptism is needed for spiritual generation, Confirmation for spiritual growth, and the Holy Eucharist as food to preserve the soul's spiritual life. We learn from this teaching the place of eminence which the Eucharist should have in what concerns our spiritual life. Finally, although the Eucharist does not imprint a character on the soul as do Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders—for it is not intended, like these Sacraments, to fit a man to do or receive something further in the Sacraments (III., Q. 63, A. VI.)—yet it is more excellent than they are, because it is the end and complement of all the Sacraments, and because it contains in itself Christ Himself in Whom exists, not the character merely of the priesthood, but the whole fulness of the priesthood.

Devout Christian, love to reflect upon the dignity and grandeur of the Holy Eucharist. Let it have the place of honour in your piety and worship. Ask Mary to obtain for you a due appreciation of the excellence of this sublime Sacrament, and a sincere and practical desire to avail yourself of its manifold blessings.

June 15.

PERPETUATION OF THE EUCHARIST.

I. Christ our Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist to be a perpetual sacrifice and Sacrament. From the time of its institution until the end of the world there was to be ever a worthy and acceptable Victim to be offered to God, and a Divine Food to nourish the souls of Christians. Through the Holy Eucharist Christ has taken up His abode in the Church, as though saying with the psalmist: 'This is My rest. . . . Here will I dwell, for I have chosen it' (Ps. cxxxi. 14). In the mystery of the Incarnation, when He was on earth, He had transient resting-places: Mary was His first tabernacle, and the Cross His first monstrance; but in the mystery of the Eucharist there is a constant abiding which testifies His loving desire that the benefits of this Sacrament may reach every generation of men. This is true, although the act in every Mass and in every Communion is a transient one, for these acts are performed continuously throughout the Church, and the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in so many tabernacles all over the earth. Let us, then, in a spirit of wonder, joy, and thanksgiving, proclaim our faith in this mystery of Christ's continual abiding with us in the Eucharist. Let us lament the lot of those outside the Church who do not believe in it, and who are therefore without the blessings derived from it.

Devout Christian, thank God for the admirable provision for your soul's comfort and strengthening during the whole of its sojourn on earth through the Holy Eucharist. Christ Himself is ever at hand. He offers Himself daily in the Mass for you, and daily, too, is the Eucharistic Banquet ready, in which He unites Himself to you. Be not in-

different in availing yourself of the blessings thus prepared for you.

II. Christians need never famish spiritually while the mystery of the Eucharist continues. They have only to partake of it if they would preserve their spiritual life. By eating what was forbidden our first parents incurred death, but by eating what is commanded in the Eucharist we receive the food of life. Concerning the fruit in Paradise that was forbidden, God said to Adam: 'In what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death' (Gen. ii. 17); but of the Living Bread of the Eucharist our Lord said: 'The bread that I will give is My Flesh for the life of the world. . . . He that eateth this bread shall live for ever.' The Holy Eucharist is a means whereby our spiritual life is preserved, and it is a pledge to us of everlasting life. Of the manna it is written: 'Thou didst feed Thy people with the food of Angels, and gavest them bread from Heaven prepared without labour, having in it all that is delicious, and the sweetness of every taste' (Wisd. xvi. 20). With what words, then, shall we speak of that heavenly food which is no other than the Body and Blood of Christ? With what hymns of joyful thanksgiving should we not manifest our gratitude to God for so precious a gift?

Devout Christian, let the thought of Christ's undying love of you, manifested in the Holy Eucharist, fill you with a holy confidence of attaining everlasting life. Receive Holy Communion often and fervently. Thus will you maintain your spiritual strength. Let it not be with you as it was with David when he said: 'I am smitten as grass, and my heart is withered: because I forgot to eat my bread' (Ps. ci. 5).

III. The mystery of the Eucharist is, then, ever with us. It was in the world before we came into it, and it will still be there when we shall have left it. What a history it has! How wonderful are the blessings in the Church, in the sanctuary, in the Christian household, and in individual souls, that it has poured forth as out of an inexhaustible, ever-flowing fountain, since its institution! One

of the Fathers of the Church describes the Eucharist as a compendium of Divine mysteries. We recognize it as a stupendous memorial of the Divine Incarnation and of the sacred Passion, and a means whereby the benefits of these mysteries are continually communicated ; we regard it as a prodigy of Divine condescension, and a bond of union between the Redeemer and the redeemed, between God and man, and we welcome it as a pledge and token of Christ's undying fidelity to His Church and to all His true followers. This mystery continues ; it will be ever with us. Our gratitude, our love, and our devotion, must also continue. Let us be filled with comfort and with confidence while the Eucharist is with us.

Devout Christian, Christ is to you in the Eucharist a pledge of salvation, and the door of everlasting life, and the graces this Holy Sacrament imparts are to you as seeds of immortality. Deep and important mysteries bearing on your present and future welfare lie hidden in the Holy Eucharist. Pray for an increase of faith in this continual memorial of Divine love. Ask Mary to obtain this gift for you, and a tender devotion to Her Divine Son present in the Blessed Sacrament.

June 16.

FIGURES OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST—I.

I. We may learn various lessons concerning the Holy Eucharist by reflecting upon some of the figures which foreshadowed this Divine Sacrament. If these figures were admirable in themselves, how much more so must not the reality be! The life-giving properties of the Eucharist were shown in figure in the tree of life that was in the midst of Paradise (Gen. ii. 9), to preserve men in perennial life. So long as Christians frequent the Sacrament of the Eucharist spiritual death shall not touch them; but wilfully to disregard that Sacrament would be to allow the soul to famish and die. The elements or species under which the Body and Blood are offered in sacrifice and bestowed in Holy Communion, are prefigured in the priestly offerings used by Melchisedech, 'the priest of the Most High God' (Gen. xiv. 18), when he blessed Abram. Foreshadowed, too, by Melchisedech's priesthood was that of the Divine High Priest, Christ our Lord, as we see in David's prophecy: 'The Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent: Thou art a Priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech' (Ps. cix. 4). These figures carry us back to the days of the holy patriarchs; the realities were to be unfolded in the fulness of time when our Lord should establish His Church. Their meaning stands revealed in the mysterious grandeurs of the Eucharist and of the Divine priesthood of Jesus Christ.

Devout Christian, the ways of God in His beneficence to men may sometimes seem slow and dilatory; they are Divine and beyond our comprehension, but they are unchangeable, developing ever fresh marvels of love. Thus has it been with the Eucharist which was long foreshadowed: this all-unmerited bounty came at last.

II. The excellence of the Holy Eucharist is seen in this, that it is both a Sacrifice and a Sacrament, and in this double character it was foreshadowed by the paschal lamb; for that lamb had to be slain and to be eaten that the Israelites might be spared by the Angel of Death. Note, too, that every family had to slay a lamb and to consume it, having first besmeared the door-posts with its blood. So now through the Eucharist is the Lamb of God, Christ our Lord, offered and partaken of, not in one place only, but in Christian families or Churches all over the world. The many lambs sacrificed by the Israelites at the pasch signified but the one Divine Lamb sacrificed on Calvary, and continually sacrificed on every Christian Altar. Moreover, the paschal lamb was sacrificed as a token of God's merciful deliverance of His people from the power and oppression of their enemies, and thus was it a prefigurement of the Sacrifice of Redemption, offered on Calvary and renewed on our Altars, whereby we are set free from the power of Satan, delivered from everlasting death, and brought on our way to the promised land of Heaven. Every Christian who partakes of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist participates in these most desirable and most necessary effects. The prefigurement, admirable as it is, does not reach in magnificence or in efficacy the Divine reality it merely foreshadows.

Devout Christian, try to realize the extent of the wonders and of the blessings revealed in the Eucharist. Truly God is with His people. Through this Sacrifice and Sacrament the Blood of the Lamb appeases the Divine wrath excited by man's rebellion and by his continued offences, and it purifies and strengthens man's heart still so fleshy and so weak. Ever desire for yourself the rich blessings bestowed through the Holy Eucharist.

III. The Holy Eucharist as spiritual nourishment was prefigured by the manna, the food provided miraculously for the Israelites in the desert, which never failed them until they reached the promised land. All partook of it, and were nourished by it. The Eucharist will never fail us in the Church, and to every generation of the faithful it

will be the means of support lest their souls should faint and die. Christians should not seek to satiate their mind and heart with worldly or carnal delights, lest they should come to imitate the Israelites, whose palate came to loathe the miraculous bread (Num. xi. 6). Rather should they foster their desire of Holy Communion, and go frequently to the Holy Table. The Eucharist was also prefigured by the loaves of proposition placed before the Lord in the Tabernacle and afterwards in the Temple. These loaves might be eaten only by men who were purified and sanctified according to the law, and they were constantly renewed so as to be ever fresh. The heavenly Food of the Eucharist is constantly consecrated, and ever in readiness for the nourishment of Christians who have their consciences cleansed from mortal sin and from attachment to sin, and who are desirous of living as faithful servants of God.

Devout Christian, learn from these prefigurements of the Eucharist to reverence and to value this Divine institution, and desire to receive this Holy Sacrament frequently for the life of your soul. Beseech Mary to obtain for you a zest for this heavenly nourishment, that it may be the means of supporting your soul during your sojourn on earth, to bring you without fail to the heavenly kingdom promised to the faithful.

June 17.

FIGURES OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST—II.

I. The sustaining power infused into the soul by the efficacy of the Holy Eucharist is prefigured by the hearth-cake given to Elias by the Angel. In the strength imparted by that food the prophet was able to walk for forty days and forty nights to the mount of God, Horeb (3 Kings xix. 8). If the food given by the Angel thus sustained the prophet, what shall be said of the food of the Eucharist, which is no other than the Body and Blood of Christ? Has it not nourished and strengthened Christians during the whole of a lifetime? In the strength imparted by the Eucharist have not the faithful overcome their spiritual enemies? Has it not been their support under adversity? Do they not partake of it frequently, that by its Divine efficacy they may be nourished in virtue and piety, and imbibe the true spirit of Christ's followers, so as to attain their heavenly destiny? To Elias the Angel said: 'Arise and eat: for thou hast yet a great way to go'; to the Christian may be addressed the words of Solomon: 'Go then, and eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with gladness' (Eccles. ix. 7); come joyfully to the banquet of the heavenly King, that thy soul may be strengthened in good works, and preserved in the way that leads to life eternal.

Devout Christian, let not your feet depart from the way that leads to the Eucharistic banquet now, for the same is the path leading to the mount of God, Heaven. Praise God for His rich and bountiful provision for your soul in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

II. Leaving now the prefigurements of the Eucharist under the old dispensation, let us consider those particular displays of our Lord's compassion, bounty, and power, which served to prepare men's minds for the institution of

the Eucharist. Our Lord's first recorded miracle was the changing of water into wine at the marriage-feast of Cana. We note that the miracle was wrought upon the occasion of a banquet, and to meet the needs of the family that was celebrating its wedding festivities. The water was by Christ's Divine power changed into excellent wine. This was not an impossibility to Christ's power, neither is it beyond His power to change the substance of bread into the substance of His Body, and the substance of wine into the substance of His Blood. It is not beyond His Divine power to effect this change through the ministry of His priests on every altar where the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered. This is the change which takes place as often as the Holy Eucharist is consecrated. Christ's words pronounced in the Mass by a duly ordained priest are omnipotent: 'This is My Body; this is the Chalice of My Blood.' True Christians believe and adore.

Devout Christian, let your faith in the consecration of the Eucharist be confirmed by your belief in the miracle wrought by our Lord at the marriage feast in Cana. Admire the continuance of this consecration as a lasting proof of our Lord's compassion, bounty, and power. Truly we are blessed in the Church by possessing the Eucharist as both a sacrifice and a Sacrament, as a centre of worship and piety, and as an ever-flowing fountain of spiritual blessings.

III. Christ our Lord further prepared men's minds for the Holy Eucharist as a Sacrament destined for all His disciples by the multiplication on two occasions of the loaves and fishes. With five loaves and two fishes He miraculously fed five thousand persons, and with seven loaves and a few little fishes He fed four thousand persons, and upon both occasions much food remained over and above after all had had their fill. The wonder of the Eucharist is even more astonishing, for all over the world Christ's followers in the Church are fed with the same Eucharistic Food. No limit is put to the number of those who may approach the sacred Banquet, provided only that they approach it worthily. Let all stand astonished at this display of Divine wisdom, goodness, and power.

Unbelievers say it cannot be; but God inspires true believers with faith in this mystery: they believe and adore. 'Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones' (St. Matt. xi. 25).

Devout Christian, do not imitate those who with an unbelieving mind reject the teaching of the Church concerning this mystery of mysteries. Thank God that the blessings of the Eucharist have been prepared for you, and are extended to you. Be resolved to avail yourself constantly of them. Beseech Mary to obtain for you the grace of a strong attraction towards this mystery of her Divine Son's love, and of so living that you may be worthy to receive Holy Communion frequently.

June 18.

REALITIES OF THE EUCHARIST.

I. In the Holy Eucharist we have not the shadow of the Divine Presence, but the reality of Christ's Presence. He is as truly present in the Blessed Sacrament as He was in the supper-room with His disciples or hanging on the Cross, and as He is now present in Heaven. Only in the manner of that Real Presence is there a difference; but the difference of manner does not in any way change or affect the reality. The very same Body that Christ took for our salvation and that He sacrificed on the Cross He gives us to be partaken of in the Holy Eucharist as food for our souls. At every Mass He says through the officiating priest: 'Take ye, and eat: this is My Body.' St. John Chrysostom would put the realities of this Divine mystery clearly before us. He says: 'These are not works of human power that are put before us. He Who accomplished them at that supper is the same Who now also accomplishes them. We take the place of ministers, but He it is Who actually sanctifies them and changes them.' True Christians do not see in the Eucharist any figure, emblem, or shadow; they adore in It Jesus Christ really present under the sacred species.

Devout Christian, let your mind grasp the clear, unwavering teaching of the Church concerning this consoling mystery of our holy religion. In presence of the Blessed Sacrament say: I believe, and I adore. When you receive Holy Communion, say with St. John: 'It is the Lord' (St. John xxi. 7).

II. Besides the reality of Christ's Presence in the Eucharist there are realities in the effects produced by the Sacrament. Fervent communicants thank God for the many graces imparted by it. They would not like to be deprived of so

efficacious a means of sanctification. Those who have been converted after living in sinful ways, and who have afterwards received Holy Communion regularly and devoutly, have been strengthened in their good purposes and have given edification by their devout lives. These effects are not imaginary, but real. To disbelieve or to doubt the efficacy of the Sacrament would be to doubt our Lord's teaching, for we gather from His words that the Eucharist is a life-giving Sacrament, in which we are united to Him, and through which we live by Him. The Holy Council of Trent teaches that it is an antidote whereby we may be freed from daily faults, and preserved from mortal sins; and it describes the Eucharist as the life of the soul and the perpetual health of the mind, called (it says) the 'Bread of Angels.' How real are the effects of this Divine Sacrament, seeing that it brings to the soul light, strength, and consolation, and that it enables us to fight the good fight, to remain faithful to duty, and to bear patiently the trials of life.

Devout Christian, impress upon your mind the wonderful fruits which the Holy Eucharist produces in the soul of the fervent communicant. Inflame your heart with an ardent desire of experiencing these effects of the Holy Sacrament.

III. Impressed with the realities we have been considering, Christians should be animated with faith and confidence in all their relations with the Eucharist. If they feel the power of evil inclinations or of dangerous temptations, they should approach Holy Communion that our Lord may strengthen them, and that He may give them to experience the attractiveness of virtue and piety. If their souls are in danger of losing a proper sense of dutifulness towards God, owing to worldly attractions or pleasures, or owing to excessive attention to business affairs, they should go to the Holy Table, where they receive that heavenly Food which renews their spiritual youth, and gives them a relish for spiritual and everlasting blessings. If afflictions, annoyances, and sorrows weigh them down, they should receive that Holy Sacrament in which our

Lord is present to refresh and console them. Thus will the Holy Eucharist become a reality to them, a source of heavenly help and blessing; and the more copiously they draw from this source, the less easily will they feel able to dispense with it.

Devout Christian, receive Holy Communion as often as you can. Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist is your truest Friend. Receive Him in this Sacrament frequently and fervently, and say to Him, as said the two disciples at Emmaus: 'Stay with us' (St. Luke xxiv. 29). Beg of Mary to obtain for you a clear and strong faith in the consoling effects of the Eucharist, and grace to realize ever more and more the benefit of this ever-living mystery of Divine love.

June 19.

TRADITION CONCERNING THE EUCHARIST.

I. The faith of Catholics in the Divine mystery of the Eucharist is strengthened in them by the confirmation it receives from tradition. Tradition in various ways bears out what they believe concerning this mystery. Consider only the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Go back to the fourth and fifth centuries, and learn from St. Hilary, St. Ambrose, and others, the clear doctrine coming from Apostolic times which had been handed down to the Christians of their day. Follow the teaching of ecclesiastical writers on through the centuries even to the present, and it will be seen that it has always been the same. St. Hilary repeats our Lord's words found in St. John's Gospel (chap. vi.), and he then says: 'No room is left for doubt concerning the reality of the Flesh and Blood. . . . It is truly His Flesh and truly His Blood.' When we reach the eleventh century we meet, indeed, with the discordant voice of Berengarius; but this misguided man retracted his errors, and died in peace with the Church.

Devout Christian, admire the firmness of the Church in maintaining in every age the clear teaching of Christ as to the Eucharist. Read with interest and pleasure whatever may serve to instruct you concerning the consoling wonders of this Sacrament, and rejoice that so many writings of the Fathers have been preserved to prove the constant tradition of the Church.

II. Let us now see what St. Ambrose teaches concerning the Holy Eucharist. He says that what is only bread before the words of the Sacrament are pronounced, when the consecration takes place, from being bread, is made the Flesh of Christ. This is effected, he says, by the words of Christ. 'It was not the Body of Christ before the conse-

cration; but, I tell you, it is now, after the consecration, the Body of Christ.' This holy Doctor declares clearly that the Eucharist is really the Body of Christ, and that the man who shall have (worthily) eaten this Body shall receive the forgiveness of his sins, and shall not die for ever. St. Augustine says: 'Christ was carried in His own hands when, committing to us His Body, He said: "This is My Body." He bore that Body in His hands' (in Ps. xxxiii.). 'He who does not abide in Christ, and in whom Christ does not abide, without doubt neither eats His Flesh nor drinks His Blood spiritually, although in the flesh and visibly he may press with his teeth the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ' (Tract. 26 in Joann.). The clear teaching of these holy Doctors is that the Eucharist is Christ's real Body and Blood, and that we must be united to Christ by grace in order that we may profit by the reception of this sublime Sacrament.

Devout Christian, be ever one in faith with all true followers of Christ. Recognize with satisfaction in the writings of the early Fathers the doctrine held by the faithful in Apostolic times, and pray for grace ever to persevere in faith in the same holy teaching.

III. St. John Chrysostom represents our Lord as saying: 'There are, indeed, parents who often give their children to other persons to be fed; but not so I, for I give as nourishment My own Flesh, and put Myself before you (to be partaken of). . . . And if I bestow Myself upon you here below, much more will I do this hereafter.' The holy Doctor teaches here, as elsewhere, that Christ really and substantially gives Himself to us in the Eucharist; and he goes on to say: 'As many of us, therefore, as are made partakers of this Body and taste this Blood, let us reflect that He Whom we receive is He Who, seated above, joined to incorruptible virtue, is adored by the Angels.' St. Cyril of Jerusalem declares that Christ, under the species of bread, gives us His Body, and under the species of wine His Blood; so that, when we communicate, we receive the Body and Blood of Christ, and are made partakers of the Body and Blood of the same. And he goes on to say: 'Thus we

become Christ-bearers (Christiferi). We are not to regard these mysteries as if they were plain and simple bread, and plain and simple wine; for they are the Body and Blood of Christ.' Finally, St. Cyril of Alexandria, having compared the union of Christ and the soul (effected in the Eucharist) with the union of two pieces of molten wax, says: 'So he who receives the Flesh and Blood of the Lord is so joined to Him that Christ is found in him, and he in Christ.'

Devout Christian, admire ever more and more the wonders of God's love manifested in the Holy Eucharist, and rejoice in the many testimonies to the truth of this mystery as it has ever been taught in the Church. Pray to Mary to obtain for you the grace of a fervent and constant devotion towards whatever appertains to the Eucharist, especially the grace of a lively faith and sincere piety in receiving Holy Communion.

June 20.

THE SACRED HEART.

I. There are, alas! many men without practical faith, to whom God would appear to be a Being with Whom they need not reckon, or an abstract principle which may be disregarded. To the Christian enlightened by faith, God is ever a living reality. To him God is the Author and Preserver of his being, and of all else that is, and his support and only hope. Servants of God from the beginning have, directly or indirectly, received teachings of truth through the Word of God, and, enlightened by them, they have recognized their duty to God, and have sought to serve Him. This Word of God, existing from the beginning, and handed down from generation to generation, has been suited to times and circumstances. It was a revelation, perhaps, not so fully discerned at first as it is now, but it was ever existing and ever sufficient. In God's own time (Eph. i. 10) there came into the world Jesus Christ, His own beloved Son. This was more than a revelation—it was a manifestation. Christ came not only as a horn of salvation to Israel, and to be a light to shine to them that were sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, but also, by assuming our nature, to open to our astonished gaze a special revelation of God's love (1 St. John i. 1-4). God thus took to Himself a human heart, with which to love us. God came amongst men, and all men have necessarily their relation with Him, and their reckoning with Him.

Devout Christian, pray that your mind may grasp ever more and more clearly this mystery of God's goodness and mercy. Seek ever to correspond with God's loving designs in your regard.

II. St. John says: 'That which we have seen and have

heard, we declare unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship may be with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ' (1 St. John i. 3). Through faith we are to be admitted into this admirable fellowship. Unbelievers will have no share in it. Our Lord declared this when He said: 'For God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son: that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting' (St. John iii. 16). Christians should study in the school of the Sacred Heart the depth and the ways of Divine love. They will find therein a fuller revelation of truth and love than that enjoyed under the Old Dispensation. According to the measure of their faith will be also the measure of their comfort and of other Divine blessings. The study of the lessons of the Sacred Heart proves of practical utility, inasmuch as it yields such holy fruits as love of virtue, patience under trial, and fervent piety. Faith, therefore, will not be sterile; it will be accompanied by devotion. Thus will the soul be lifted up to that sacred fellowship of which St. John speaks. Thus, too, will our Lord both teach us the mystery of His love and draw our hearts to Himself.

Devout Christian, Jesus Christ is ever at hand to bestow His grace upon you, and to lead you in the ways of Christian holiness. Be not like the foolish ones of the world who find no time for piety. Be faithful in fulfilling your practices of piety, and ever foster devotion to the Sacred Heart. Desire that your heart may ever respond dutifully to the love of the Sacred Heart.

III. We regard the Sacred Heart as the fountain of our Saviour's love. Should it not, then, be dear to us? It is the Heart of our Lord and Master; it is the Heart of the Good Shepherd, Whose sheep we are. It is the one Heart which, above all others, we may and should trust; it is the only one which we adore. From It was poured out for our salvation the Precious Blood even to the last drop. What a revelation was this of God's love! We are not surprised that, when devotion to the Sacred Heart became universally practised, a thrill of fervour was felt throughout the Church. New and consoling favours have been bounti-

fully accorded by the Sovereign Pontiffs to the faithful in order to encourage this devotion. We are assured that our Lord Himself promised special blessings to all who should practise it. When we have considered the love of the Sacred Heart, and all our Lord's works of mercy for mankind, we may rightly exclaim with David: 'I will extol Thee, O God my King: and I will bless Thy Name for ever. . . . They shall publish the memory of the abundance of Thy sweetness. . . . The Lord is sweet to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works' (Ps. cxliv. 1, 7, 9).

Devout Christian, be happy and rejoice in contemplating the mystery of your Saviour's love. The Divine attraction of so much love should draw your heart from all attachment to what is evil, and from undue seeking after earthly comforts. Ask Mary, your heavenly Protectress, to recommend you to her Son, and to obtain for you constancy in piety. Turn ever to the Sacred Heart in distress and temptation, and beseech your loving Saviour ever to lead you by His grace in the way of His good pleasure.

June 21.

ST. ALOYSIUS.

I. Among the Saints many were distinguished for their innocence and austerity. Prominent among these is St. Aloysius, of whom we speak as the 'Angelic Youth.' In life he was eminently pure, and in spirit and practice penitential even to severity. It may be said that, when God took him to bestow upon him his crown, earth presented to Heaven a choice and delicate flower. Although the surroundings of his early life presented him with attractions which might have tied him to the world, grace captivated his pure heart, and drew him into the path of an exalted sanctity. Prayer was his delight, and it became as a habit with him: it occupied his interior spirit even during his studies and exterior diversions. Devotion to the most Holy Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin was in his soul as a sweet, refreshing, ever-flowing fountain. Faith, in him so earnest and as a second nature, barely concealed the realities from his gaze, and he spoke his soul-utterances to Jesus and Mary as if he saw these heavenly Beings personally and manifestly present. Treading the world, the flesh, and the devil under foot, he carefully avoided their snares and delusions, and he placed a severe and constant guard over all his senses. So perfect was his conduct in these respects, that the least indiscretion on his part was unknown.

Devout Christian, study well the ways of this great Saint. His conduct points to the principles upon which yours should be formed if you would avoid all evil, and advance in holiness. Lament your negligences, your indiscretions, and your many faults.

II. St. Aloysius was remarkable for his self-imposed penances. To a severe use of the discipline, he added

other corporal mortifications, so that he might be described as being constantly united to Christ suffering. His object and desire in a severe life of fasting and corporal penances were that thereby he might expiate his faults, and keep his unruly passions under subjection; that he might experience greater freedom and ease in prayer; that he might offer to God, in union with our Lord, some atonement for sin; and that he might prove in a practical way his devotion to the Sacred Passion. His mortifications merited for him the keenest hatred of all evil, and the grace of a spotless purity. To St. Aloysius religion was as the moving-spring of life. Faith pervaded his soul as the sap of its life, hope strengthened it, and Divine love inflamed it and gave it its every movement, urging it forcibly on in the path of sanctity. Difficulties were raised on the part of his father, but Aloysius, following the impulse of grace, determined to embrace the religious calling. Finally, his father's objections were overcome, and Aloysius was received into the Society of Jesus at Rome. His career in religion was short, but it was marked with the stamp of earnestness and zeal, which rendered him an object of admiration and reverence to his community and to those with whom he came in contact.

Devout Christian, admire the paths of perfection by which God led St. Aloysius to so great a height of sanctity. Seek to know God's will in your regard, and to be faithful in corresponding with the grace vouchsafed to you. It is not by His will that you are remiss and faulty. Seek to amend.

III. Eminent sanctity may be attained in a few years as well as in many. The ways of grace are secret and inscrutable. It may be said of St. Aloysius, who was only twenty-four years old at the time of his death: 'He was taken away lest wickedness should alter his understanding. . . . Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time' (Wisd. iv. 11, 13). His purity was not only untarnished; it was lustrous. If so great a Saint, in order to protect and foster this exquisite and delicate virtue, deemed it necessary to avoid every appearance of indiscre-

tion, to guard his senses with extreme vigilance, and to employ constant prayer and severe penances, what should be said of ordinary Christians if they be self-indulgent, unguarded, and indiscreet? Will they not expose themselves to some blemish? Let us learn from St. Aloysius a sincere and constant love of holy purity. Let us also learn from him how to find time for prayer and devotion. The exterior claims of his home life did not prevent him from giving much time to private devotion, and at all times he lived in union with God. Christians in the world should remember that 'not in bread alone doth man live' (St. Matt. iv. 4), and that God has provided nourishment for their soul as well as for their body. They should find time for their ordinary devotions, and for receiving the Holy Sacraments. Sometimes, however, they seek too eagerly earthly gains and pleasures, and neglect their spiritual and eternal interests.

Devout Christian, recommend yourself devoutly and earnestly to the intercession of St. Aloysius. Beg for grace to resist and overcome the many dangers of the world, and to be zealous for your spiritual welfare. Ask Mary to be ever a Mother to you, as she was to St. Aloysius, and by her powerful intercession to obtain for you a greater love of virtue and piety.

June 22.

DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART.

I. God in admirable ways draws the faithful to love Him. In special difficulties He provides special means of preserving faith and piety in His Church. When the faithful of the seventeenth century were suffering from the rude shocks of many revolts against the authority of the Church, and from increasing laxity in social life, our Lord revealed His Sacred Heart to His servant, Blessed Margaret Mary (A.D. 1675), and commanded her to spread devotion to it. Ecclesiastical permission was granted in 1686 for the diffusion of this devotion, and from that time the Sovereign Pontiffs have in various ways promoted it. On June 16, 1875, Pius IX. consecrated all the faithful to the Sacred Heart. Devotion to the Sacred Heart is bound up in a special manner with two other devotions—namely, that to the Holy Passion of our Lord, and that to the Blessed Sacrament, which are the two special manifestations of our Lord's love. This devotion enraptures our mind and our affections by the consideration of the part which our Lord's most sacred and loving Heart played on earth in the work of our redemption, and of the part which It still sustains now glorified in Heaven, and dwelling upon our Altars in the Blessed Sacrament. This loving Heart ever displays goodness and mercy, and ever seeks to draw our hearts to Itself.

Devout Christian, lift up your love and your desires to your most tender Saviour. In the midst of your worldly cares and innocent pleasures, do not forget the claims of His Sacred Heart. Alas ! when men leave God out of their thoughts, their hearts often become selfish, worldly, unbalanced, and sensual. Devotion to the Sacred Heart will help to make your heart pious and true to God.

II. Although the heart is regarded as an emblem of love, this devotion is not directed to the Sacred Heart merely as to an emblem. No; its object is the very Heart Itself of our Saviour, as being His Heart—the Heart of Jesus that once beat upon earth, that passed through the portals of death, that lay still and cold in the tomb, and that is now glorified, ever living in Heaven and in the Blessed Sacrament. Our Lord wishes us to do honour to His Heart, and to seek by our devotion to It to make reparation for men's ingratitude. When we speak of our Lord's Heart, we speak of the immense love of that Heart, and of the works of our Lord's love. We attribute these works to the promptings of His Sacred Heart, which we regard as the very fountain of His love. We show devotion to His Heart, in the first place, because He wishes us to do so, and because it is His Heart; and, in the second place, because He demands from us some reparation for men's ingratitude. We ourselves need to make reparation for our past coldness and indifference, and for the many ways and the many times in which we have wounded the Sacred Heart. When, moreover, we consider the unceasing ingratitude of so many men who break the Divine Law, and live without religion, we should be fired with indignation and touched with sincere sorrow. Let us by our devotion try to do something to make amends for the wickedness and ingratitude of sinners.

Devout Christian, join with all pious Catholics in this devotion to our Lord's most Sacred Heart. This devotion is to them the source of many heavenly blessings. Come to draw water with joy from the fountain of the Sacred Heart. Seek to testify to your devotion.

III. We may ask ourselves in what way we should show devotion to the Sacred Heart. Heart will not be drawn to heart while we remain in sin, and while we make no serious effort to correct our greater failings. When will we be in earnest in avoiding sin? We shall not be free from the shackles of sin until we have conceived a sincere and lasting hatred and horror of it. We shall not correspond with the love of the Sacred Heart if we leave our vices unchecked

and our faults uncorrected. We must, moreover, show fervour. Love is suspected when it gives no tokens. Let us seek to honour the Sacred Heart, and let us take part in public devotions to It. If we do not receive Holy Communion more frequently, let us receive it at least on the first Sunday of every month in honour of the Sacred Heart. Let us venerate the holy statues and pictures of the Sacred Heart, and wear the holy scapular of the Sacred Heart. We may also say often the Litany of the Sacred Heart. Let us consecrate ourselves to the Sacred Heart, and turn to It with love and confidence in all our needs and troubles. Our Lord says to all: 'Come to Me all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you' (St. Matt. xi. 28).

Devout Christian, listen to our Lord addressing you in the words of the Book of Proverbs: 'My son, give Me thy heart: and let thy eyes keep My ways' (xxiii. 26). Correspond joyfully with this loving invitation. Run confidently to the Sacred Heart as to the abode of holiness and peace. Beseech Mary, whom we style 'Our Lady of the Sacred Heart,' to obtain for you the grace to enter piously into the spirit of devotion to the Sacred Heart, and to be constant in this devotion.

June 23.

RECOURSE TO THE SACRED HEART.

I. THE Sacred Heart of our loving Saviour is unfathomable in its sustaining and comforting grace, and in its tender mercy. Christians in every age have experienced this when they have had recourse to It. Seeing Whose Sacred Heart it is, how could it be otherwise? The outpouring of Christ's love and mercy is according to an eternal decree; it is in keeping with His Divine character, and with the work for mankind which He set Himself to accomplish; and it will continue in every age, 'even to the consummation of the world' (St. Matt. xxviii. 20), as long as the Good Shepherd is with His flock. The Sacred Heart beats even for sinners. Does not the Good Shepherd go in search of the wandering sheep? How many sinners, moved by grace and feeling keenly their wickedness and misery, have turned in sorrow and repentance to Jesus, and have received pardon! Who shall describe the intense consolation with which countless repentant sinners have gone away from the tribunal of penance? They went to it burdened with the load of their sins, and Jesus relieved them of it, and refreshed their souls. Then with what a new impulse of fervour and joy they made a fresh start in the service of God!

Devout Christian, you are not without your sins and failings. Do not allow them to weigh you down, or to cause you misgiving or discouragement. Show your confidence in the Sacred Heart. Hasten to that fountain of Divine mercy, and continue to have recourse to it, but always with sorrow and with love, and Jesus will relieve you of your burden. Praise ever the mercy of the Sacred Heart.

II. Reflect upon the extensive character of our Lord's invitation: 'Come to Me, all you that labour, and are bur-

dened, and I will refresh you ' (St. Matt. xi. 28). Not only sinners, but also all who feel the burden of this life's cares, should go with confidence to the Sacred Heart. Christians are never without a friend while they may have recourse to Jesus. How many devout Christians in every age, when robbed of every earthly consolation through the harshness of the world, the unkindness of friends, cruel disappointment in the family circle, or sickness and bereavement, have gone with confidence to the feet of Jesus in fervent prayer or in Holy Communion, and have experienced comfort and encouragement! Grace from the Sacred Heart gave them strength to bear the burden of their trials and sorrows, and consolation to sweeten what was so bitter to nature. These Christians were not disappointed when they had recourse to Jesus; He refreshed them.

Humble yourself, devout Christian, under your trials, and acknowledge that on account of your many sins you deserve even greater chastisements; but do not give way to discouragement. In a spirit of faith recognize the wisdom of God's providence in sending these trials, and display your confidence in His goodness by having recourse to the Sacred Heart, the fountain of Divine consolation, praying for grace to bear them patiently and meritoriously, or for relief from them, according, however, to God's good pleasure.

III. Reflect that Christians who are sensible of their own weaknesses and of their want of solid virtue or devotion should also have recourse to the Sacred Heart, that they may draw from that fountain of sanctity the graces they need to become more perfect. They should meditate upon the virtues of the Sacred Heart, and upon the virtues their Christian character and calling demand in themselves. When their mind is fully impressed by these meditations, they should address fervent prayers to our Lord for the graces they need to enable them to become more meek and more humble, more obedient and more patient, and in character more spiritual and more devout. Through such prayers the faulty, the weary, the faint-hearted, and the fickle, have felt the attraction of piety, and have been led

to greater effort for their spiritual good and everlasting welfare. They have received in answer to their prayers a greater relish for heavenly things, and a more practical love of God.

Rejoice, devout Christian, in the prospect of deriving like benefits from recourse to the Sacred Heart. How long will you weary yourself in seeking what is vain, delusory, and passing in this world's satisfactions, at the cost of what is more profitable? Admire the riches and bounty of your Saviour, Who deigns to fill with good things those who in a spirit of piety address their pleadings to His Sacred Heart. Beg the efficacious prayers of your heavenly Mother, Mary, beseeching her to obtain for you a more intense and constant love of the Sacred Heart, and a spirit of greater dutifulness in having recourse to It.

June 24.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

I. THE sanctity of St. John the Baptist is attested by our Divine Lord Himself, who declared: 'Amen I say to you, there hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist' (St. Matt. xi. 11). Of this Saint God said by His Prophet Malachias: 'Behold I send My Angel, and he shall prepare the way before My face' (Mal. iii. 1). These words declare St. John's sanctity and his mission. He was to be our Lord's forerunner. Zachary, filled with the Holy Ghost, prophesied: 'Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways' (St. Luke i. 76). We are filled with wonder when we consider St. John's long and arduous preparation for his mission. He lived in the desert; he was clothed with a garment of camel's hair, having a girdle of leather; and he supported life on locusts and wild honey. He was about twenty-eight years of age when he began to preach the coming of the Messias, exhorting the people to do penance. By a special privilege, foretold by the Angel, and received upon the occasion of our Lady's visit to Elizabeth, St. John was sanctified before birth, and he ever maintained his innocence. Those, however, to whom he preached needed penance. Patiently, zealously, courageously, and fearlessly, he fulfilled his mission, and wonderful were the conversions wrought by his preaching.

Devout Christian, receive with attention and thankfulness whatever message God sends you, and let it bear fruit in your life. God said by His Prophet that even as the rain falls from Heaven, and waters the earth to make it productive, 'So,' He said, 'shall My word be, which shall go forth from My mouth: it shall not return to Me void'

(Isa. lv. 11). God invites you to amend what is faulty, and to live ever ready for His coming.

II. We must prepare ourselves for our Lord's coming by being ready to die, that when we reach the term of our life we may pass to God and the heavenly reward. We must, like St. John, preserve our innocence; or, if we have lost it by mortal sin, we must, like the Jews to whom St. John preached, do penance, so as to be restored to the state of grace. All should strive to preserve the grace of their baptism. Happy are those who never fall into mortal sin! Although they may commit lesser sins, they yet remain the friends of God, and they do not forfeit their right to the heavenly inheritance. A weighty responsibility rests upon parents of watching over their children, of instructing them, of inculcating into their tender minds right principles and a love of virtue, of having them educated by Catholic teachers with a surrounding in which they may imbibe Catholic ideas and instincts, and of keeping them from dangerous companions. Because these things are neglected, children are exposed to be a prey to their evil inclinations, or to exterior seductions, and thus to fall from grace. Religion in sentiment and practice must foster grace if innocence is to be preserved. How edifying and attractive is the spectacle of Christians who are innocent in mind and heart, in conversation and conduct, and who are exemplary in the practice of their religious duties!

Devout Christian, ever love the ways of virtue and the practices of religion. The holy writer says: 'They that fear the Lord will prepare their hearts, and in His sight will sanctify their souls' (Ecclus. ii. 20). Ever watch over your ways, and raise your heart in prayer to God.

III. If we fall from grace, there must be sincere repentance accompanied by penance if we would be saved. To the fallen our Lord says: 'Except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish' (St. Luke xiii. 5). O precious penance! O saving penance! how few love you! yet you are necessary to all who have fallen into mortal sin if they would escape the wrath of God and the punishment of Hell.

When penance is done, how happy are its fruits! Grace is restored, and the lost inheritance is regained. To the truly penitent, as surely even as to the innocent, lies open the way to the heavenly reward. 'The wickedness of the wicked shall not hurt him, in what day soever he shall turn from his wickedness' (Ezech. xxxiii. 12). How few there are who are imbued with the true spirit of penance! Men fall into grievous sins of the flesh and into intemperance, yet after their confession they offer to God no special tokens of penance, no pleasing fruits of devotion, and no acceptable restraint or mortification. The self-imposed penances of true penitents have no place in their lives. Let all who have fallen into sin, especially into mortal sin, listen to St. John's exhortation and warning: 'Do penance: for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' The rich graces of the kingdom of God on earth are for the true servants of God.

Devout Christian, desire for yourself the spiritual blessing provided for the Elect in this world, and the heavenly rewards which will be their portion hereafter. Mortal sin is the obstacle to receiving them and enjoying them. Beseech Mary, the first and most honoured among the Elect, to obtain for you a true zeal for your salvation. If you have fallen, and risen again by penance, take care never to fall again.

June 25.

FRUITS OF DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART—I.

I. Our Lord complained of the unreality of the religion of the Jews, saying: 'Their heart is far from Me' (St. Matt. xv. 8). We must be careful not to incur the same reproach. Our Lord seeks our heart, and we may say that our religion is vain if it be not religion of the heart. Our heart must be in our worship, in our obedience, in our sorrow, and in our amendment, otherwise they will be insincere. On God's part, there is a living and effective activity in the operations of His grace; and on our part, there must be a hearty co-operation, otherwise the work of our sanctification will not be accomplished. Our co-operation must be an act of the will; grace will be bestowed to aid us to produce this necessary act. Often, alas! has the heart of man failed to correspond with grace, and opposed it. There was man's disobedience in the Garden of Eden; there was men's lust at the time of the Deluge, when God complained that 'all the thought of their heart was bent upon evil at all times' (Gen. vi. 5); there was men's false religion when they turned their hearts to idolatry; and in these times there is the spirit of religious indifferentism, men neglecting the duties of supernatural religion, and giving their heart to the pursuit of natural science and earthly comforts. What will correct the present disorders? What will win men's hearts for God? Men must return to a right understanding of religious teaching, and to an earnest endeavour to lead Christian lives. Among Catholics, an effectual remedy for indifferentism is devotion to the Sacred Heart.

Devout Christian, love this devotion. Seek from the Sacred Heart that unction and earnestness in piety which

will safeguard your religiousness, and make you ever attentive to your soul's highest interests.

II. Our Lord said: 'I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled ?' (St. Luke xii. 49). He sought to inspire men with Divine charity, to move them to fervour in God's service, and He established in His Church the means of effecting this desirable object. The preaching of His holy doctrine enlightens men's minds (Ecclus. xxiv. 44, 45), and grace reaches their hearts through the channels of the Holy Sacraments. The Holy Eucharist in a particular way sustains and invigorates their souls, and nourishes fervour. The various devotions of the Church all tend to increase the piety of the faithful. May, then, praise be ever given to God, Who has not withdrawn Himself from the world, but Who is ever busy among men by the operations of His grace ! Why are men indifferent to these operations ? Why do they disregard so much holy doctrine, and neglect the means of grace ? Why do they remain cold in the service of God ? Our Lord said: 'Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also' (St. Matt. vi. 21). Men seek earthly treasures, they love the good things of the present life, therefore are their hearts strangers to Divine charity. As it was when our Lord was on earth, when 'He came unto His own, and His own received Him not,' so, alas ! is it now. Many men are Christian only in name, and many, too, have departed from Christ's teaching who yet pretend to be His followers. St. Paul, however, says: 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His' (Rom. viii. 9).

Devout Christian, cling dutifully to your Divine Saviour's teaching; it will comfort your mind and guide your steps. But love also the path of fervour in His service, and avail yourself assiduously of the means of grace, that by God's aid you may persevere in fervour. True devotion to the Sacred Heart will lead you to do these things.

III. Where there is true devotion to the Sacred Heart there is also fervour; for fervour is one of its chief fruits. Devotion to the Sacred Heart has special relation both to the mysteries of our Saviour's sufferings and to the Holy

Eucharist. In the Passion, our Lord shed every drop of the Blood of His Sacred Heart for love of us, and in the Holy Eucharist that same loving Heart ever dwells with us, and unites Itself to our poor frail heart. In both these admirable and consoling mysteries there is an outpouring of the love of the Sacred Heart. In them our Lord seems to say, in the words of the Prophet: 'My Heart is become like wax melting' (Ps. xxi. 15). Devotion to the Sacred Heart leads us to contemplate these evidences of our Saviour's love, and inspires us with sentiments of love and gratitude. It also puts the Sacred Heart before us as a Model for our heart in humility, meekness, charity, and patience. Moved, too, by our devotion, we will often address fervent prayers to the object of our love, and we will cast ourselves upon our Saviour's compassionate Heart in our difficulties, in our sorrows, and in our needs. All this means and betokens heartiness in our service and earnestness in piety, and it cannot but bring upon us the blessing of the Sacred Heart.

Devout Christian, love tenderly and constantly the Sacred Heart of your Lord and Master. Join willingly with devout clients of the Sacred Heart in their practices of devotion on the first Friday or Sunday of every month, and in the month of June. Plead through Mary's intercession for the grace of this devotion which is so pleasing to her Divine Son, and which is fruitful in so much good.

June 26.

FRUITS OF DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART—II.

I. THE Sacred Heart loves men, but is not loved by men. Happily, there are exceptions, for Jesus has His lovers. Sad, however, is the return He receives from the greater part of men. Our Lord Himself has mercifully instituted devotion to His Sacred Heart as a remedy for men's indifference; for religious indifference is one of the first steps on the road to eternal death. From this death our Lord would save us. He is our Heavenly Father, our loving Brother, our gracious Saviour, and our Good Shepherd; and His Sacred Heart beats for us with all the fulness and tenderness of affection which these characters demand. If we only respond to His condescending love for us, there will be no indifference on our part, but love will be our ruling passion. To how many men, alas! might be said what St. Peter said to Simon Magus: 'Thy heart is not right in the sight of God' (Acts viii. 21). They do not think of the love of the Sacred Heart for them. Is not the love of Jesus deserving of being remembered and commemorated? This is one of the objects of devotion to the Sacred Heart. To those who forget His love Jesus might say in reproach what God of old said to Israel: 'For whom hast thou been solicitous and afraid, that thou hast lied, and hast not been mindful of Me, nor thought on Me in thy heart? for I am silent, and as one that seeth not, and thou hast forgotten Me' (Isa. lvii. 11).

Devout Christian, Jesus, Who is silent now, will yet speak out, and His words to those who now forget Him will be words both of reproach and of condemnation; but His words to those who are faithful to Him will be words of comfort and commendation.

II. Happy are those Christians who seek to respond to

the love of the Sacred Heart. They will not be as sheep without a shepherd, nor as sheep who have strayed from the fold. They will not easily depart from the ways of grace, nor be easily captivated by the vanities of the world. They will gather and enjoy the fruits of piety, and walk securely in the paths of peace. The response must not be one of empty words and unreal professions, but a faithful following of our Lord. He is God, and His claims to our service are supreme. We must not make any compromise with the world, or with our own evil inclinations. Our love must ever have an elevating tendency, and, with all our present faultiness, we must yet ever desire and labour to do better. Our heart will thus be drawn ever more earnestly to God, and religion will become ever a more powerful factor in our lives, guiding us and supporting us. Then will be corrected over-eagerness for worldly gains and joys; then will be overcome slothfulness in attending to our spiritual welfare; and then will be corrected whatever is inordinate or misplaced in our affections. Then will the voice of our Lord be sweet in our ears, whether He speaks to us from the mountain of the Transfiguration or from the hill of the Crucifixion, for our heart will be His. O Christians, this is the duty you owe to the Sacred Heart. Why will you seek to satisfy every other claim but that which your loving Saviour makes upon you? 'O ye sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity, and seek after lying?' (Ps. iv. 3).

Devout Christian, do you respond dutifully to God's love? Lament ever your continued faultiness. Pray for the grace of a practical devotion to the Sacred Heart, that your steps may be steadied amidst the vicissitudes and temptations of this present life, and that your heart may not be drawn away from God.

III. Let indifference to God's love cease to be. Let devotion to the Sacred Heart be taken up, and fulfil its purposes. Let fervour move our hearts, and let dutifulness guide our conduct. Let praise be on our lips, and let religion be in our hearts. St. Paul says: 'If, then, any be in Christ a new creature, the old things are passed away,

behold all things are made new' (2 Cor. v. 17). Let the prophecy be fulfilled: 'Behold, I do new things, and now they shall spring forth. . . . I will make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert' (Isa. xliii. 19). Let grace bear fruit in our lives, and let glory be given to God. Let our eyes be cast upward to heavenly things now, and let preparation be made for the everlasting blessings which are in store for us. This will be according to St. Paul's advice, where he says: 'The time is short: it remaineth that . . . they that use this world be as if they used it not: for the fashion of this world passeth away' (1 Cor. vii. 29, 31). Let sinners depart from their ways of neglect, and from their evil courses; let worldlings give up loving vanity and passing distractions; and let all, under the sweet unction of love of the Sacred Heart, cease to be indifferent about spiritual things, and render to God the things that are God's (St. Matt. xxii. 21). The right order of things will thus be restored, and a healthy vigour will animate the soul.

Devout Christian, let it not be said that you are indifferent about the love of our Lord, or about His claim to your gratitude and service. Remember St. Paul's words: 'If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema' (1 Cor. xvi. 22). Ask Mary, who is styled the 'Singular vessel of devotion,' to obtain for you a zeal for God's honour, and a desire to make amends to the Sacred Heart for the indifference and ingratitude towards our Saviour of the greater part of men.

June 27.

FRUITS OF DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART—III.

I. THE love of our heart for the Sacred Heart should play an important part in our spiritual life. Our Lord seems to say to us: 'Put Me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm' (Cant. viii. 6)—that is, upon our affections and upon our conduct. Devotion to the Sacred Heart may to some extent be emotional, but it is above all practical. It should, indeed, captivate our affections and thus take possession of our heart, which is the citadel of the soul, the seat of the affections, and the moving spring of our actions; but it must also direct our arm and control our conduct. There are many ways of manifesting this devotion. We may show it by acts of love of the Sacred Heart, by prayers and devotions directed to Its honour, by pious meditations on Its virtues and character, by striving to copy Its virtues, by devotionally wearing the scapular of the Sacred Heart, and by consecrating to the Sacred Heart our lives and our works. Our devotion should combine interior piety with exterior practices and virtuous conduct. Would that devotion to the Sacred Heart, as thus understood, might be spread all over the world! Then would be realized the fruits of our Lord's coming, for He has come, as Gabriel foretold to Daniel, 'that transgression may be finished, and sin may have an end, and iniquity may be abolished; and everlasting justice may be brought' (Dan. ix. 24).

Devout Christian, cultivate ever more earnestly devotion to the Sacred Heart, that its fruits may be manifest in the graces you draw from this fountain of all sanctity, and in the affection with which you strive to lead a good life. Then will you not wound the Heart of your loving Saviour by serious transgressions of the Divine commands, but you will honour it by your faithful service.

II. Devotion to the Sacred Heart is not a matter of pious sentiment only, but, as we have seen, it should impress itself upon our conduct. If our love, once enkindled, be kept alive by a continual practice of this devotion, many happy and consoling results must necessarily follow. If men remain worldly and irreligious, tepid and sensual, it is because they do not study to grow in charity. Now, this growth in Divine charity is one of the chief fruits of devotion to the Sacred Heart. The measure of our love will be the measure of our perfection. 'If you love Me,' our Lord says, 'keep My commandments.' If you love Me, your whole life will be guided and controlled by My holy law, and you will find your happiness in doing My will. You will love Me in heart and will, and by your works, and you will love Me truly, generously, and constantly. Christians, your love should be such as this. Look to the Sacred Heart for inspiration and attraction. It is the Divine Heart which has loved men so much. Drive from your hearts all attachment to sin. The beginning of your fervour, like the beginning of true conversion, must be in the heart. God said of old by His prophet: 'Be converted to Me with all your heart' (Joel ii. 12). Turn, then, to love God with all your heart, for such is the Divine command.

Devout Christian, say with St. Paul: 'I live in the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and delivered Himself for me' (Gal. ii. 20). Beg of the Sacred Heart the grace to fight against tepidity, self-indulgence, and worldliness, which are serious obstacles to Divine charity.

III. Spiritual advancement will be a consoling fruit of constant devotion to the Sacred Heart. As our heart becomes more deeply impressed by our Lord's love, especially as manifested in the holy Passion and in the Blessed Eucharist, we shall become more unworldly and more mortified. Our sense of what true piety demands will lead us to exercise a more perfect restraint over our mind and senses, and a greater curb on our natural inclinations. Moreover, we shall give ourselves more fervently to the practice of devotion and to the reception of the Holy Sacra-

ments. Our Communions will be more frequent. While giving due attention to our worldly affairs, to the just claims of society, and to considerations of health and relaxation of mind and body, we shall be actuated in all this by motives pleasing to God, and we shall avoid all excess. Devotion to the Sacred Heart will also be fruitful in inspiring us with proper sentiments of patience and resignation under the labours and sorrows of life, for the lessons of our Lord's sufferings will not be lost upon us.

Devout Christian, recognize from these considerations that devotion to the Sacred Heart will not be wanting in many rich spiritual blessings, and be determined to practise it with fervour and constancy. Beg of Mary, who is the truest lover of that most loving Heart, to obtain for you a sincere relish for this admirable and profitable devotion. May it be ever to you a stay and a comfort during life!

June 28.

THE SACRED HEART LOVES US.

I. We read in the prophecy of Jeremias God's words: 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee' (Jer. xxxi. 3). God manifested this love in Creation. He gave being to creatures upon which He might lavish His love—the Angels in Heaven and man upon earth. When man fell into sin, God still loved him, and He sent His own Son to be man's Redeemer; and during man's life on earth He bestows on him countless tokens of His love. So He still loves him. He does not cease to love him at death, for when man dies in grace, God bestows upon him an everlasting Kingdom. At their death the just are admitted to God's everlasting embrace. That men may respond to so much love, God infuses into their soul the grace to love Him—the gift of Divine charity. Two things could make us intensely miserable—the one if God did not love us, and the other if we did not love God. If we were not persuaded that God loves us, this world would be to us only a dreary waste: there would be nothing to lift up the character of our works—they would be works to no profitable purpose—and there would be nothing to sustain us under the cares and hardships of life—they would be cares without a meaning. If we were not persuaded that God loves us, the future would have no attraction for us; the thought of it would add to our gloom. Happily, however, we believe that in Heaven God's love will reign supreme, and that there God will make His Elect drink of the torrent of His pleasure (Ps. xxxv. 9).

Devout Christian, contemplate the consoling mystery of God's love with gratitude and satisfaction. What His love in your regard has prompted Him to begin, He will bring to the desired accomplishment. You are destined to live

in union with God for evermore. O happy thought! O glorious destiny! Love God above all, that you may be worthy of this destiny.

II. We contemplate with fresh wonder and delight another mystery of this same love of God for man. God has taken a human heart wherewith to love us. This is the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This Heart beats ever with the love of us. It would have our hearts beat with the love of It; it would have us lean upon It, and cast upon It all our cares, and even all our sins. The Sacred Heart loves us with a love that is both human and Divine. What may we not expect from such a love? As Jesus Christ is truly man, so is His Sacred Heart a real human Heart; it is not the mere figure of one, nor is it a phantom one. It is a Heart of flesh and blood, the most perfect of human hearts; a Heart that feels, that compassionates, that loves. Its sentiments and emotions were evinced in the words and works of our Lord when on earth. It is still the same Heart, although now glorified, and It still has the same sentiments. It is a Heart that knows no imperfection, that is always true, and that cannot be false. It loves sincerely, faithfully, and constantly. It needed not to be schooled to love; It is Itself the very school of love, and the fountain of Divine charity. Our Lord said to Blessed Margaret Mary: 'Behold, this Heart which has loved men so much.'

Devout Christian, let this Sacred Heart be ever the object of your tenderest devotion. It is lit up with the flame of the purest love, to lead you in the path of Divine charity, and Its fires spread out to catch and attract all hearts. Pray for the grace of an ardent charity, that you may not love through constraint, but with a strong and pure desire. Yield yourself to the loving desires of Jesus' most faithful Heart. His desires, dispensations, and designs, are all for your welfare and happiness.

III. We have not far to go to find proofs of the love of the Sacred Heart. Our Lord did not come into the world for His own sake, but for ours. How patiently, then, for our sakes, He lived under obedience, under trials, under

persecutions, and among enemies too! How bravely for our sakes He faced the way of the Cross, and gave Himself up to death! How true was His Sacred Heart! The proofs of His love did not cease at His death. How lovingly our Lord made provision for His followers in the mission and powers with which He invested the Apostolic order! 'As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you' (St. John xx. 21). When He addressed His Father before His sacred Passion, He prayed: 'Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee. As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to all whom Thou hast given Him' (St. John xvii. 1, 2). His mission was, then, to bring all men to eternal life. He continues it through His Church, especially by the ministry of the Word and of the Holy Sacraments. But above and beyond all the rest, what a legacy of love He has left in our favour in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar! Through this Divine Sacrament He places in our hands the only Victim acceptable to His Heavenly Father, He nourishes our souls with His own Body and Blood, and He abides with us. And in this Holy Sacrament we possess His most Sacred Heart. Could love go farther?

Devout Christian, admire all these proofs of the love of the Sacred Heart. Will you not trust that true and loving Heart? Will you not seek to correspond with Its love? Shall there be no love on your side? Ah, contemplate with wonder and with gratitude the ways of God's everlasting love! Beseech Mary, dearer than all others to the Sacred Heart, to obtain for you grace to be constant in your love. Regret your past indifference, and seek now in earnest the path of fervour.

June 29.

ST. PETER.

I. Our Lord honoured St. Peter by making him the Chief of the Apostles and the Supreme Pastor in His Church. St. Peter's faultiness, foreseen from the first by our Lord, to Whom all things were known, did not prevent our Lord from raising him to these high dignities. Earthly monarchs have bestowed on their favourites earthly dignities and extensive authority, but such favours bear no comparison with the rank and powers conferred upon St. Peter. He was made the foundation of the Church of the New Law: 'I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in Heaven' (St. Matt. xvi. 18, 19). These words declare St. Peter's universal jurisdiction. He was made the Pastor of pastors and of the whole flock of Christ: 'I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren' (St. Luke xxii. 32). 'Feed My lambs. . . . Feed My sheep' (St. John xxi. 15-17). Therefore did Peter rise up in the midst of his brethren (Acts i. 15), and speak for all to the people (Acts ii. 14), and give directions to the pastors of the early Church (1 St. Pet. v. 2). When, therefore, our Lord departed to Heaven, He did not leave His Church without government. There were both government and a throne—the throne of His Vicar fully empowered, invested by Himself, and enlightened and endowed by His Holy Spirit.

Devout Christian, revere St. Peter because of his eminent dignity. Honour this chosen Apostle of Jesus Christ.

Admire God's all-wise dispensations for His Church, whose spiritual and saving mission is to every generation of men till the end of the world.

II. The throne of the fisherman, St. Peter, is that of the Vicar of Christ. In this we see verified St. Paul's words: 'The weak things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the strong' (1 Cor. i. 27). Let none despise this throne. The majesty of our Lord's supremacy supports it and overshadows it. Not in vain has Christ set up this throne, and appointed His Vicar to occupy it. St. Peter and his successors to the end of time are to watch over the purity of the doctrine of the Church, and of the standard of morals to be maintained among the faithful, and over the discipline and good order that must ever reign in Christ's spiritual Kingdom on earth. They are to have spiritual charge over all nations and peoples, with a jurisdiction that is universal as to every place, every person, and every act of spiritual power. The throne of Christ's Vicar shall never be swept away. The persecutions and disturbances of past ages have tended only to make the throne more firm. Other dynasties, and even other nations, have passed away, but the throne of Peter has received from its Divine Founder perpetual stability.

Devout Christian, recognize with admiration and thanksgiving the authority with which St. Peter was endowed, and the continuance of that authority in the supreme pastors of Christ's Church. Ever listen with respect to the words and directions of the Sovereign Pontiff, and submit dutifully to the disciplinary orders that emanate from the throne of Christ's Vicar.

III. We have to admire the ardour with which St. Peter, save in a moment of weakness, served his Lord and Master. If he abandoned our Lord in His Sacred Passion, and even shamefully denied Him, his unworthy conduct in these matters tends to warn us against self-confidence; and our Lord's forgiveness which accompanied St. Peter's repentance fills us with a hope of experiencing a like measure of mercy. St. Peter afterwards gave our Lord three earnest assurances of his love, he spent his life in Apostolic labour,

and he suffered a glorious martyrdom, thus sealing with his blood his faith and devotedness. Christians may study with advantage the lesson of this great Apostle's life. Let all cling dutifully to the sheepfold of the great Pastor set by Christ over His flock; let their faith be lively, unshaken, and constant; and let them live at all times piously. The Church must in every age be holy. We may not live upon the reputation of our forefathers in the Faith; we must be holy ourselves. We should look with suspicion upon religious ideas that shock our Catholic minds by their novelty or vagueness, and we should submit without demur to every authoritative utterance from the Chair of Peter.

Devout Christian, desire to spend your life like St. Peter in the service of your Divine Master. Like him, you may have to suffer opposition, but your suffering for Christ's sake will be glorious. Ask your heavenly Mother Mary to obtain for you the grace of devotedness to the Church, and of zeal for your own spiritual good; and this with such effect that 'when the Prince of pastors shall appear, you may receive a never-fading crown of glory' (1 St. Pet. v. 4).

June 30.

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE SACRED HEART.

I. The Sacred Heart of Jesus affords us many consolations, and it lifts up our poor frail hearts to better things. Our heart must respond to the feelings manifested towards it by the Sacred Heart, which wishes to impart its heavenly gifts to all mankind. The chief of these gifts is charity. When once our heart is inflamed with earnest love of God, it will withdraw itself from what would obstruct our salvation, and it will seek the things pleasing to God. Then shall we understand that life should not be regulated and governed by whim, fancy, or passion. Enlightened by a purer doctrine, and won by grace, we shall see that, under the guidance of religion and reason, of principles dictated by wisdom and justice, we must fulfil our duty to God and our neighbour, submit ourselves to the dispensations of Providence, and study to procure by the appointed means what will be for our temporal and spiritual welfare. All this will save us from many disorders, and make us even-minded amidst the joys and sorrows of life. If we thus follow the guidance of true religion and of right reason, we shall never see eternal death; we shall walk in the ways of justice, and enjoy the blessings of Christian peace here below, and we shall be with God in the heavenly kingdom hereafter.

Devout Christian, seek from the Sacred Heart this precious gift of Divine charity. Desire ever to be guided in your life by true Christian principles, that you may not be misled by the whims of your own wayward will, but may conform yourself to God's good pleasure, ever loving what is wise and good.

II. We shall be led to love the Sacred Heart by the consideration of our Lord's love of us. His love was mani-

fested in His whole life. We see it displayed in all He underwent for us in Bethlehem and Egypt; we see it in His years spent at Nazareth in retirement, submission, and labour, during which He was a model of the virtues He would demand in His followers; we see it in His works of mercy and compassion performed during His missionary career; and we see it in a marked degree in His sacred sufferings and death. Did He not Himself say: 'Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (St. John xv. 13)? His love is further displayed in the bountiful provision He has made in the Church for our spiritual welfare, and for our salvation. The prophecy has been fulfilled: 'You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains' (Isa. xii. 3). To these life-giving and refreshing waters of grace our Lord invites us, saying: 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink' (St. John vii. 37). Christians who respond dutifully to the invitation receive an increase of charity. Their minds are won by our Lord's admirable teaching, and their hearts fall under the influence of His sanctifying grace. They happily become our Lord's followers not in name only, but by the character of their lives.

Devout Christian, study the holy lessons of Christ's life and teaching, and seek to profit by them. Our Lord encourages you, saying: 'To him that thirsteth I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely' (Apoc. xxi. 6). Avail yourself frequently and devoutly of the Holy Sacraments, which are channels of Divine grace. All this will comfort your soul, and draw you more closely to Christ.

III. The Sacred Heart, now glorified, not only dwells enshrined in our Lord's glorified Body in Heaven, but it is with us on earth. It is offered in sacrifice in every Mass, it is received in every Holy Communion, and it is in the Blessed Sacrament in our Churches. How consoling to us this should be, and what an incentive to piety it should prove! Christians, the Sacred Heart is with you, living and working in your midst. How silently, in our Lord's own beneficent way, are our souls enriched from out of this treasury of Divine grace, while they are drawn to a more

perfect love of God! The very presence of the Sacred Heart in our midst brings down countless blessings upon us; but richer and more abundant favours fall to those who pray for them, and who seek them through the Holy Eucharist. The silent presence of Jesus in our midst is not less real because it is hidden under the veils of the Eucharist. He is there as the Spouse waiting to hear the voice of the beloved one, and He says to us: 'I sleep, and My Heart watcheth' (Cant. v. 2). While awaiting our prayers and the voice of our love, what are the sentiments of the Sacred Heart towards the Eternal Father? What are its pleadings for men who forget God? What are its satisfactions for sinners? What immeasurable honour it renders to God, and what mercies it showers upon men!

Devout Christian, rejoice in the Divine dispensations of love and goodness which surround you. Should they not wean your heart from all that is evil and vain? Rejoice, too, in the glory which the Sacred Heart ever gives to God, and pray that your heart may ever seek God and love His glory. Beseech your heavenly Mother Mary to obtain for you the grace of greater constancy in loving God.

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